

Rosaleen
among the
Artists

Elisabeth Sanxay
Holding



COLL. U. M.
ART IN FICTION

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ROSALEEN AMONG THE ARTISTS

ELISABETH SANXAY HOLDING

“Rosaleen observed that this fiercely scorned and detested sentimentality very often caused people to act with the greatest nobility. While common-sense and enlightened self-interest seemed frequently to bring forth incredible baseness.”

ROSALEEN AMONG THE ARTISTS

BY

ELISABETH SANXAY HOLDING

AUTHOR OF "INVINCIBLE MINNIE," ETC.



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BOOK ONE: THE BETRAYAL

CHAPTER ONE

No sooner had she got inside the door than the tears began to fall; and all the way up the four flights of dark stairway they were raining down her cheeks. She had to wipe them away before she could see to put the latchkey into the lock.

Everything neat, orderly, familiar; just as she had left it a few hours ago, and all seeming in its blank sobriety to rebuke her for her desperate hopes. She went into her own bare and chilly little room and lay down on the cot there, sobbing forlornly, clutching in her hand the card he had given her—a sort of talisman by means of which she could reconstruct the enchanted hour of that afternoon. She remembered every word he had said, every detail of his appearance. And, recollecting them, wept all the more to think what she must forego.

“Of course, I’ll never see him again!” she cried. *“I’ll have to forget all about him. . . .”*

But she knew that she could not forget him. It seemed to her that she had never seen so remarkable,

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so attractive a person. His face, when he had turned round, that thin, dark face with its haughty nose, the underlip scornfully protruding, the serious regard of his black eyes. . . .

She had not particularly noticed him at first, except as a gaunt and rather shabby young man sitting on the bench behind her on top of the bus. She had been absorbed in watching Fifth Avenue, which had, on that bright October afternoon, the absurd and exciting festival air it so unaccountably assumes. She was solemnly happy, singing under her breath, looking down at the people, the shops, the motor cars that were going by; when there came a sudden violent jolt and the coin she was holding had leaped out of her hand and fallen to the street below. And it was the only one she had!

She had sprung up in a panic; ready to jump off the bus and walk all the long way home, but at the top of the little stairway she had met the conductor coming up.

“FARE!” he had said, with suspicion.

“I just dropped it—a minute ago!” she explained. “I was . . . I had a quarter in my hand—and it fell out. . . .”

“Oh, it did, did it?” said he.

“I’ll get off at once,” she said.

“Oh, yes!” said the conductor. “Of course you

dropped it! But you just happened to be where you wanted to get off when you dropped it, though, didn't you?"

She gave a miserable, deprecating smile, anxious only to escape from this humiliation, to get away. When suddenly that young man had got up, put a dime into the conductor's register, and raised his hat ceremoniously to Rosaleen.

"Allow me!" he had said.

"OH! Thank you!" she had cried. "Thank you! . . ."

"Not at all!" said he.

She had resumed her seat on the bench ahead of him, and tried to look with exaggerated interest at the street. But she was terribly distressed. She felt that she hadn't said enough—not nearly enough. Surely she ought at least to suggest repaying him, or something of that sort;—not to sit there and ride along, with her back turned to him.

And though of course she couldn't know it, he was just as troubled. He had heard her say that she had dropped a quarter, and it occurred to him that she might very well need the rest of it badly, for more carfare, perhaps, or something else very necessary. . . . In the course of time the idea became intolerable. He leaned forward and touched

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her gently on the shoulder; and she had turned to regard him with alarmed grey eyes.

“I beg your pardon . . .” he began. “But . . . I’d be very glad . . . if you would permit me . . .”

He saw that she didn’t comprehend.

“I overheard you say that it was a quarter you had dropped,” he said. “If you—perhaps you particularly wanted the change . . . ?”

“Oh! . . . No! . . . No, thank you very much, indeed, but I don’t. I’m going right home. I—No, thank you just the same!”

She was so immeasurably grateful that she could not bear to turn her back on him; she faced him, confused, but smiling, passionately anxious to be nice to one who had been so nice to her.

“Isn’t it a beautiful day?” she had said.

“Yes, it is!” said he. “Very!”

She kept on smiling, but it was a strained and wretched smile, and the colour in her cheeks deepened. A ridiculous, an intolerable situation! She couldn’t keep on in that way, twisted half round in her seat, and smiling and smiling. . . . She *had* to turn away.

But a little later she turned back again.

“Isn’t that florist’s window lovely?” she had said.

“Yes, it is!” he answered. “Very!”

He, too, wished to be nice, but couldn't; and once she had resumed her normal position, although then he thought of a number of things he wished to say, he couldn't suddenly make remarks to her back. Neither could he touch her on the shoulder again, for he considered that would be vulgar. So after much thought, he finally got up and standing beside her and holding fast to the back of the seat to keep his footing on the lurching deck, he asked her if she could tell him what building that was?

She did so, gladly.

"I haven't been in the city long," he said, with a chivalrous desire to give her information about himself. "I'm from Charleston."

"Oh, are you? Do you like it here?"

"No," he answered, promptly. "Not much."

She was a little taken aback at that, and while she was thinking of a polite rejoinder, the young man had taken from his pocket a leather case, and was proffering a card.

MR. NICHOLAS LANDRY.

"Thank you!" she murmured.

He waited a moment, hoping perhaps for some sort of reciprocation, but none came. So—

"May I sit down?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, do!" she answered.

A long time seemed to go by.

"I wish—" he said, and paused. "I wish I could see you again."

There was a sort of self-assurance about him that somehow inspired her with confidence in him. It had not the least trace of effrontery, nor was there anything ingratiating about him. His air seemed to tell her that, if she didn't want to see him, she need only say so, and that would be the end of it. He was quiet, courteous, but far from humble. He was, in fact, rather lordly. And she liked it.

"Well . . ." she began. "I—I'd like to—pay you back that fare. . . ."

"Perhaps you'd let me call?"

He was startled at her vehemence.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "Oh, no! You couldn't! I'm sorry—but you couldn't!"

Her face had grown crimson and her eyes were filled with tears, and she kept her head resolutely turned aside.

This surprised, embarrassed and a little annoyed him. Did she think he was trying to force himself upon her? He said nothing more after that.

But at last, as they drew near his corner, he spoke again.

"Well!" he said, rising, with a slight sigh. "I'm sorry!"

She turned quickly.

"If—if you'd like . . . to-morrow . . . in the Fifth Avenue Library . . .?"

Again he was surprised, amazed at this sudden and anxious invitation. But he politely concealed his surprise.

"Nothing I'd like better," he said. "What time?"

"About three?"

"I'll be there!" he assured her. "Just where?"

"Oh . . . that hall that goes down to the circulating room. . . ."

He stretched out his hand to ring the bell.

"But you haven't told me your name!" he said.

"Oh! Rosaleen!" she said. "Rosaleen—Humbert."

Then once more raising his hat with a smile that enthralled her, he had vanished down the stairs, and a moment later she had seen him going down a side street—a lean young figure with a long stride.

• • • • • • • • •

"I shan't go!" she sobbed. "Of course not! What would be the sense? I'd just better forget all about him."

"It wouldn't be fair!" she went on. "Because—if he knew . . . he wouldn't want to see me. . . ."

Useless to recollect newspaper tales of dukes and

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chorus girls, of millionaires and waitresses, of Cophetua and the beggar maid in all its modern guises. All those people were different. There was no other man like him, no other woman like her. What is more, Rosaleen had no faith in romance. Had not her history been what *anyone* would call romantic, and wasn't it as cruel and dull and cold as any life could be?

She sat up and dried her eyes.

"No!" she said. "No use thinking about it. . . . No use making a fool of myself."

It had grown quite dark. She got up and lighted the flaring gas jet on a wall bracket, and looked at the big impudent face of the alarm clock standing on her austere bureau top. And at the same time caught sight of her own face, stained and swollen with tears, but still lovely in its pure young outline, with the wise innocence of those drowned grey eyes. The type one calls "flower-like," with the exquisite fineness of her old, old race, the deep set eyes, the passionate and sensitive mouth, the strange look of resignation. She was rather fair, with light brown hair and a sweet and healthy colour; she was slender and not very tall; she looked fragile, but she was not. She had a strength, an energy, an endurance beyond measure.

An endurance well known and profited by in this

household. She brushed her fine hair and pinned it up tightly and carelessly; she bathed her eyes in cold water and tied an apron about her waist. And went along the corridor of the dark, old-fashioned flat to the kitchen. All neat as a pin there. Potatoes closely pared, soaking in cold water, lettuce in a wet cloth, a jar of lard set to cool on the window sill, ready for the inevitable frying. She set to work briskly to prepare the supper, and when it was cooking on the stove, she set up the ironing board and began to press a pile of napkins and handkerchiefs. And began to sing to herself in a low and mournful voice.

At six o'clock came the expected sound of a key in the latch, and presently a venerable grey-bearded old gentleman put his head into the kitchen.

"Well! Well! Well!" he said, benevolently. "Aha! Something very savoury there, I think, Rosaleen!"

"I hope you'll like it," she said, smiling.

"Will it be long?"

"Not an instant. I'll set the table now. Shall we wait for Miss Amy?"

"I think not. I think not. Better get it over with, eh?"

She smiled again, and putting up the ironing board, began at once to lay the table for three. The

venerable old gentleman had vanished into his room, and was seen no more until she knocked on his door.

“Dinner!” she said.

He came out again very promptly, closing the door behind him, and took his place at the head of the table. He bowed his grey head, Rosaleen bent her sleek one, and he said a solemn grace. And then set to work to carve the scraggy little steak. It didn’t take much to make him grateful; their standard of living wasn’t exalted; tough meat, with potatoes and a canned vegetable, that was the regulation; then as a dessert either canned fruit or a pie from the baker’s. And the lettuce, which it was considered necessary for his health that Mr. Humbert should eat every evening.

Rosaleen sat opposite him, still in her apron, thankful for once for his inhuman indifference. He wouldn’t notice that she had been crying. They didn’t talk; they never did. What could they possibly have to say to each other?

The light from two jets in the gasolier over the table shone clearly, illumined every corner. All quite neat and clean, with a sort of bright stuffiness about it; a greenish brown carpet on the floor, a couch bed concealed by a green corduroy cover, four varnished oak chairs spaced primly against the wall. In one corner stood a sewing machine covered with

a lace tablecloth, on which was a fern in a pot decorated with a frill of green crêpe paper. On the mantelpiece stood a geranium similarly ornamented, and on the table another. From the gasolier and from the curtain pole over the doorway were suspended half coconut shells filled with ferns. Hanging in the windows by gilt chains were two "transparencies"; one was moonlight in Venice, all a ghastly green, and the other was a church with lighted windows gleaming redly over the snow: no doubt they were to compensate for the lack of any view except that of the wall of a courtyard. Nothing in this familiar hideousness to arrest Rosaleen's glance; she looked restlessly about, longing for the venerable old gentleman to have done with his coconut custard pie.

At last (of course) he did.

"Don't forget to save something for Miss Amy!" he said, and disappeared again into his cubicle.

While Rosaleen went about her solitary work, washed the dishes, scoured the pots, boiled the dish-towels and hung them to dry, swept the floor, and at last could put out the gas and go away, leaving her domain in perfect order. Nothing more to be done. . . .

Then was the time when the pain, the unhappiness which she had thought to be conquered, and lost

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in resignation, came back to her again, stronger, more bitter than ever. In all her hard life there had never been anything so hard as the renunciation of this unknown young man.

“But I won’t go to meet him!” she said. “He’d be sure to find out. And then it would be all the worse. . . . Now I’ve only seen him once, and if I never see him again, I’ll soon forget him. Oh, much, much better not to go!”

“But if he liked me *very* much, he wouldn’t care *who I was!*”

That thought, however, held no consolation. *He would care.* She knew it. She had read in every feature of his face the most obstinate and tyrannical pride.

“But maybe he’d never find out?” she persisted, desperately.

And looked and looked in the mirror, with fervent anxiety. One might have thought she expected to see her secret stamped on her brow.

CHAPTER TWO

I

THEY thought she had forgotten, because she never mentioned anything of that, never asked a question. But she hadn't. No! She remembered, and at her worst and loneliest, she longed for the old times. Besides, she had three times heard Miss Amy relating the story when they believed her to be asleep in bed, and each time she had heard it told, the most immeasurable bitterness, the most devastating misery had rushed over her.

“Why ever was I *born*?” she used to cry to herself.

And hadn't she also heard Miss Amy murmur, not imagining herself overheard, that: You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear! What else can you expect from a girl like *that*?

It had hurt and angered her so; it had left her without gratitude, without even justice. She quite hated Miss Amy.

Lying in her bed that night all these feelings flamed in her with fiercest intensity, shame, bitter-

ness, and, above all, a great and unassuaged grief for that incomparable friend whom she had lost, for the kind and sturdy Miss Julie, dead these five long years.

Miss Julie had meant to do a kindness. She intended—and if she had lived she would have succeeded in—benefiting Rosaleen.

“I remember it as if it were yesterday,” Miss Amy had begun her thrice-told tale, “The day that Julie brought her here. . . .”

Well, and didn’t Rosaleen remember it, too? Who better?

II

It had begun ten years ago in the Life Class at the Girls’ Institute of Practical Art where Miss Julie, bravely disregarding her thirty-five years, had commenced to study. Upon the death of their very old father, the three Humberts, brother and two sisters, had left their farm in Maine and had come to New York to live. They were independent now, and in a hurry to leave their old homestead, to be free from that atmosphere, where they had passed a dreary childhood and a youth frightfully oppressed by the old man. Crude, strong people, they were possessed of a strange and pitiful craving for “cul-

ture." Perhaps because they were rather too old and too repressed for pleasure.

Mr. Humbert had found a position in an office, fulfilling a lifelong dream of gentility, and his great hands, worn and roughened with the hard labour of the farm, seized eagerly upon the pen. He had made himself into the likeness of a scholar, without learning, without aptitude; he had covered himself with the shell of a scholar, and he deceived himself and his sisters and all the rest of their little world. Miss Amy had found it hardest to adapt herself. She was by nature the perfect village gossip, the meddlesome and vindictive spinster inflicted upon every community in all corners of this earth. She was cruel, jealous and stupid. Left to herself she had been unable to discover in all the city anything which really interested her. But a casual neighbour had taken her in hand, and under her direction she developed strangely. She became absorbed in Interior Decorating. She had not a vestige of taste; she never dreamt of applying at home any of the principles of which she read, but she dearly loved to see pictures and to read about fine old furniture, about rugs, about Antiques. She used to go to Auction Sales with great pleasure. Also, with mysterious facility, she made a number of friends. In the stores, the markets, in the street cars, she would

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drop into conversation with strangers, and she would never let them go. She managed so that within a year's time she was able to go out *somewhere* nearly every day.

Miss Julie, as we said, began at once to study art, with rapture. No one could imagine how she enjoyed that Life Class—a most refined and earnest class, thoroughly feminine, and inclined to fussiness. There were only twelve members and five of them had scholarships of which they were doggedly determined to take advantage. They came early, so as not to waste a minute, and they carried out every minute suggestion of the teacher. The models were all investigated, and a good reputation was of more avail than a fine body. Respectable women, generally a trifle heavy, “picturesque” old men with white beards, a young man or so who was invariably struggling to study something, and was not to be discouraged by posing all day and amusing himself all evening.

The class was on this particular morning assembled, all ready, sitting before their drawing boards, and a little indignant at the delay. They couldn't bear to waste time.

“Ten minutes late!” said one of them. “It's to be a child to-day, isn't it, Miss Humbert?”

Miss Julie, as monitor, was informed and answered yes.

"I don't care about doing children," said the student, "I don't think they're interesting. That last little boy was perfectly square."

Just then in came a fat, smiling woman in black, holding a little girl by the hand. Miss Julie pointed out the dressing screen, and they disappeared behind it. For an unreasonably long time their voices were heard, whispering.

It was Miss Julie who voiced the indignation of the serious class.

"Aren't you ready to pose yet?" she called out. "We've wasted over twenty minutes."

"Just a moment, please ma'am!" answered the woman's pleasant voice, and presently she emerged, still leading the child by the hand. Reluctantly the little thing came out from behind the screen, a thin, white body; then suddenly she broke violently away from her mother and disappeared again.

"Saints deliver us!" said the woman with a sigh. "Did you ever see the like?"

And she went after the child, and evidently tried to drag it out, for it began to cry, in a low, hoarse little voice.

"No! No! I can't! No, Mommer! I can't!"

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“Naughty little thing!” said one of the serious students, with a frown.

But Miss Julie had got up and gone behind the screen.

“What’s the matter?” she demanded, with severity.

“That child!” said the mother. “She’s that obstinate there is no reasoning with her at all. She’s made up her mind she will not stand out there for the young ladies to draw.”

“Why?” demanded Miss Julie.

“Some silly notion,” said the mother.

Miss Julie looked down at the little girl; she had pulled her dress round her shivering little body and was crouched against the wall, with eyes to break your heart, full of terror and anguish. Miss Julie was shocked.

“What’s the matter, pet?” she asked, gently. “Aren’t you well?”

The child couldn’t answer, only shook her head, while tears began to roll slowly down her cheeks. Miss Julie went down on her knees beside her, and tried to put an arm about her, but she cowered away.

“Tell me!” she entreated. “Why don’t you want to pose, my dear?”

With lips trembling so that she could scarcely speak, the child told her.

"I want . . . to—get dressed. . . . I don't . . . want them to see me."

"Hasn't she posed before?" Miss Julie asked the mother.

"No, she has not. I've done the best I—"

"Do you mean to say you're trying to force her—when she feels as she does—when she's *ashamed*?"

The stout woman did not flinch at all before Miss Julie's stern glance.

"It will do her no harm," she said. "Only for these young ladies and while she's so young."

"It's very wrong!" cried Miss Julie. "It's—it shouldn't be allowed."

"She's engaged already. For two hours at fifty cents an hour. She needs the money and she will have to do the work for it," the mother remarked grimly. "Go on with you, Rosaleen!"

"Get dressed!" said Miss Julie to the child. "You can pose in a costume. I'll find something."

She explained as well as she could to her classmates, but received no general sympathy. Most of them thought the child was awfully silly.

"And she's made us waste half our time," said one of them. "I'm going to complain in the office."

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Miss Julie devised a costume which she said was a gipsy dress. She went behind the screen again and found the little girl in underwaist and petticoat, buttoning up her poor, scuffed little boots.

"We'll take those off," she said. "You won't mind being bare-legged."

She dressed the little thing while it stood there like a doll. A beautiful child, too thin and altogether too small for its years, but very charmingly and gracefully built; it had deep-set clear grey eyes and a wistful small face, broad at the brow and tapering to a pointed chin, like a kitten's. And it had about it something which enslaved Miss Julie, some mystic and adorable quality which she could not name, and which no one else saw.

She unfastened the two scrawny little "pig tails" and let her ill-kept brown hair fall about the neck, pitifully thin, like a bird's; then she tied a broad scarlet ribbon about her forehead and put on a short spangled jacket over the underwaist. She looked very unlike a gipsy, with her meek glance and her fair skin, but she was undeniably lovely, and the class set to work drawing her without further grumbling. She was quiet as a lamb, quick to obey any suggestion, evidently anxious to atone for her naughtiness. She looked pitifully tired, too.

Miss Julie was quite determined not to let this

child vanish. She resolutely stopped the stout woman as she was leaving.

“You won’t make her pose any more, will you?” she said, entreating.

“I’m a poor woman,” said the mother, “and I have to do the best I can.”

“But it’s——”

“It’s fifty cents an hour, Miss, that’s what it is. And I need the money that bad.”

“I’ll find something better for her to do,” said Miss Julie, rashly. “If you’ll give me your name and address, I’ll find something *much* better. Only —she mustn’t do this. It’s not right, feeling as she does.”

“Only Saturdays and after school,” said the mother. “I do the best I can for her, but ‘tis not very much, where there are six and me a widow. She goes regular to the Sisters’ school, and she is doing fine there. She’s not twelve yet and——”

“She’s very small for that age,” said Miss Julie.

“She is small,” her mother agreed, “and childish-like for her age. But she’s smart. Last Christmas didn’t they give her a prize—a book with poetry in it—for elocution.”

Miss Julie had wished to regard this mother as a brute, a fiend; she had not enough experience or subtlety to comprehend lights and shades. Every-

one must be good or bad, and no shilly-shallying. So she regarded this note of pride in the woman's voice as hypocrisy.

She watched them as they went out, the rusty widow with her profoundly cynical red face, the fragile, shabby child clinging to her, stealing sidelong glances at the "young ladies," who were getting ready to go home. She was determined to save that lovely and abused child.

She had hurried home to "consult" her brother. Not that she had any real regard for his opinion or any desire to know what it was; she knew, in fact, that he probably would advise her to use her own judgment. But she considered it decent to consult the man in the house; so she approached him with her idea.

"A lovely little thing," she said. "Really beautiful—and so intelligent looking."

"Yes?" said Mr. Humbert.

"And something really refined about her. . . . Really, Morton, I should like to adopt her."

That roused him. A child in the place! Impossible! He tried to argue, but he couldn't. He was never able to. He had some queer constitutional inability for argument; a fatal lassitude would overwhelm him before he had begun even to express his views. He always ran away, shut him-

self into his own room and forced himself to forget whatever it was that he had found unpleasant.

“I’d have to see the woman, of course,—investigate . . .” he said, hoping in this way to push the whole topic away into the distance.

But his sister agreed with alarming promptness.

“Of course!” she said.

Well, then, two days later, when he came home from his office, and as usual put his head in at the kitchen door to announce himself and to see what was going forward, he saw sitting in two chairs side by side a voluminous widow and a thin little girl, drinking cocoa with relish and with elegance, little fingers crooked in the air.

“This is Mrs. Monahan!” said Julie, briefly.

He saw that he was expected to go in and question this stout woman with an amused red face, and he would have preferred death.

“I’ll leave the matter in your hands, Julie,” he said, and hastened into his own room, positively trembling with fright.

It wasn’t long before Julie knocked at his door.

“We’ve come to a temporary arrangement,” she said. “I actually believe that woman’s glad to be rid of her child.”

Forgetting that the forlorn little child was still sitting in the kitchen, and able to hear every word.

Quite true that Mrs. Monahan had agreed to abandon her child almost completely. She loved Rosaleen, but she didn't feel it necessary to have her with her; and anyway, hadn't she plenty of others? To know that Rosaleen was living in comfort somewhere in God's world was quite enough. *She* hadn't a trace of sentimentality. An excess, even very slight, of whiskey or even of strong boiled tea, could cause Mrs. Monahan to shed tears and to shake her head with delicious melancholy over life and its pains, and she professed to look upon death as a blessed release. But all this in no way affected her actions. She resigned her lovely child to this erratic and sentimental spinster because she saw very clearly the benefits which might be obtained. But she would not even pretend to be grateful.

Later in the evening she returned as she had promised, bringing with her a bundle of Rosaleen's effects, and she found her child sitting on a sofa in the sitting room, holding before her face a big geography book which Miss Julie had said contained interesting pictures, while behind it the tears were trickling slowly down her cheeks. She rushed at her mother like a whirlwind, and kissed her and em-

braced her, clinging to her desperately. Mrs. Monahan also wept, but nevertheless went away.

Miss Julie's heart ached for the deserted little creature.

"There! . There!" she said. "You mustn't cry, dear! Come! We'll go into your own nice, comfy little room and put your things away, and then you'll feel more at home."

She led her into a decent enough little cell, clean and orderly, and opened the little bundle. It did not contain what, according to all proper stories of poor little girls, it should have contained, the traditional clothes, few in number, but neatly patched and darned, and spotlessly clean. Mrs. Monahan had taken it for granted that a new outfit would be bought for Rosaleen, and she hadn't wasted her time mending things that would certainly be discarded. She had, on the contrary, kept all Rosaleen's better things at home, for the other children, so that what Miss Julie unwrapped was poor enough.

"A bundle of rags!" she reflected, shocked.

She didn't quite know what to do with the child that evening. She was very anxious to make her happy, to console and comfort her. She sat down at the piano and played all her small repertory—marches, polkas, mazurkas, and waltzes, all of the

brilliant style. But Rosaleen was thoroughly accustomed to piano playing; every family she knew had one piano-playing daughter. Her mother had once had a piano, on "time payments"; it had had to go back whence it came after three months, but she had enjoyed experimenting on it while it lasted.

Then Miss Julie gave her picture books to look at, things insultingly beneath her intelligence. This good lady didn't realise that Rosaleen had for a long time been treated as an adult; that she sat with her mother and her mother's friends, listening with profound interest to long tales of illnesses, births, deaths, of bad husbands and good ones, of tragedies beyond the knowledge of this household. Babies scalded in wash tubs, women maltreated by their men, girls who disappeared, lingering illnesses in bleak poverty. So blank and desolate for her was this first evening at the Humberts, that she was glad enough to go to bed at nine o'clock, although her usual time was at least two hours later.

Miss Julie tucked her comfortably into her clean little bed, opened the window, put out the light and kissed her good-night.

"If you want anything, call me!" she said. "Are you quite comfortable, and all right, pet?"

The child answered, "Yes, ma'am!" But almost before the door had closed upon her benefactress, she was weeping bitterly.

Miss Julie let her sleep late the next morning, and when she finally awakened, she was greeted by a new face, beyond words welcome to her, a good wrinkled old Irish face. It was Mrs. Cronin, who came in to wash by the day.

"They're all out!" she announced to the little girl. "You and me will be keeping house together all the day. How will that suit ye?"

Rosaleen said it would suit her grand; she dressed in great haste and hurried into the kitchen, where Mrs. Cronin gave her some nice bitter black tea which had been sitting on the stove this long while to get the strength out of it. She likewise pilfered a little bacon fat from Miss Amy's carefully preserved jar, and fried an egg in it.

And in the process muttered of Miss Amy, in uncomplimentary vein.

"Her, with the long nose of her poking into every bit and bite a poor old woman would be eating. . . . Never a drop of milk does she leave for me, nor meat to taste on the tip of your tongue. . . . Well, now, then, how do you like all of this, and the fine new home, and all?"

"I do not like it," said Rosaleen. "I wish. . . ." She choked back a sob. "I wish I was home again."

"Whist! Ye have no sinse at all!" cried Mrs. Cronin, secretly delighted. "Did ye not sleep in a fine bed last night?"

"The wind did be blowing on me!" she said.
"For the window was left open."

"'Tis one of their notions," said Mrs. Cronin, scornfully. "They pay for coal to keep up a fire the night long and then lave the windows wide."

Rosaleen then told her that she wasn't used to sleeping in a room alone or in the dark.

"There's a street light shines in our window the night through," she said, "and there's the lot of us, my mother and my sister and the baby and myself. 'Tis more sociable like."

They talked with gusto for hours. They were equals, in spite of the fact that Mrs. Cronin was sixty and Rosaleen eleven. Mrs. Cronin told a deeply interesting story of her sister's boy who had been sent to a *Protectorate*, for no proper reason at all; a case of flagrant injustice which Rosaleen understood perfectly, one of her own brothers having been threatened. Rosaleen was not downcast now, or tongue tied; she, too, had stories to tell. Modest and gentle she was, as ever, but a citizen of the world, with experience, albeit vicarious.

IV

It had gone on for five years, a life of boredom, of loneliness, mitigated only by the unfailing kindness of Miss Julie. A flat, insipid existence. She

found the Humberts' conversation unfailingly dull, their routine almost intolerably stupid. She longed beyond measure for the comfort and freedom of her old home.

All this had astounded Miss Julie. She was never able really to see how impossible was her task, never realised that she could not mould this fragile and wistful child into a Humbert. Or reach her. Material pleasures made no appeal to that simple soul; she cared next to nothing for good food, good clothes, a soft bed. She was always docile, thoroughly a good child, ready, obedient, sweet-tempered. She didn't give the least trouble, and never asked for anything. But she nevertheless disappointed Miss Julie. She didn't seem to change as she should have changed. Their cultured atmosphere didn't transform her. She sat at their table night after night, meek and clean, with down-cast eyes, never speaking unless spoken to, always and forever the poor widow's child in the stranger's house.

Miss Julie did her best. She sent her to school; she gave her kind and tactful information about baths and toothbrushes; she saw that she was well fed and nicely dressed. She took her to the circus every spring, and now and then to an entertainment considered suitable. Also she taught her to play a

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few babyish pieces on the piano, and, what most pleased the little girl, she had begun to teach her to draw. When all those activities were cut short by her death.

Even now, after five years, Rosaleen couldn't bear to look back upon that. She had been desperate with grief, a little mad thing. She had been brought in to look for the last time at her friend, she had seen her lying there, much the same as usual, a stout, sallow woman with blunt, good-humoured features. And for the first time that face did not smile at her, that voice did not speak to console and to reassure her.

Miss Amy had no comfort to give. She had never liked the child. She consented now to keep her, because "dear Julie would have wished it," but she kept her as a servant, an unpaid servant, with "privileges." She sat at the table with them, she was still nicely dressed, she was given a little—a very little—pocket money. And she was permitted to go every Sunday afternoon to see her mother. Miss Amy had no inclination for continuing Miss Julie's battle. She did not wish to improve Rosaleen. Miss Julie had tried with all her tact, all her ability, to divorce the child from her family, but Miss Amy encouraged intercourse. It helped to keep Rosaleen in her place.

CHAPTER THREE

I

THOSE days were gone now. There were no more of those Sunday afternoons in her mother's kitchen. A sister had married well, and the whole family had migrated to Boston, where the unwilling and resentful son-in-law could "keep an eye" on them. Rosaleen had written two or three times to her mother, but had never had an answer. And with her sorrowful resignation, had given her up as lost.

But whenever a dark hour came, her memory flew back to that spot, recalled to her that time spent in the dreadful dirty old kitchen with her mother, a little bit intoxicated, seated before the table covered with oilcloth, and usually a neighbor or two, widow women, or married as it might be, all drinking tea and complaining. There was always a baby sister or brother crawling about the floor, and a cat; it was always warm, steamy, indescribably friendly. The depth of it, the vitality, the kind, consoling human flavour of it, of those slovenly women who were forever bearing children, whose

talk was of life and death, of pain, sorrow and earthly joys! Compared with it, the hurried artificial conversation of Miss Amy and Mr. Humbert was like the talk of shadows. . . .

She was thinking and thinking of it that night.

“All right!” she said, bitterly. “I won’t deny it! I’m common! I’m not happy here. I don’t belong here. I don’t appreciate it. I hate it! I wouldn’t be like Miss Amy for anything. . . . Of course *he’d* soon see that. He’d find out that I’m—common. . . .”

But she couldn’t bear the thought. She sat up in bed.

“Oh, but I haven’t had a chance!” she cried. “I’ve *never* had a chance! Oh! . . . If I could just see him alone, I could show him that I’m . . .”

She could not explain to herself just what she knew herself to be, just what it was that she wished this young man to know. It was that pitiful secret thought of all human beings, whether a fallacy or a profound truth can never be demonstrated—the thought that if you know me, you will love me, that if you hold a poor opinion of me, it is because you misunderstand me.

Perhaps after all she would go, just this once, just see him, and trust to his comprehension. . . .

She waked up the next morning, still undecided,

her heart as heavy as lead. She dressed in the dismal twilight of her little cell, weighing and deliberating, hesitating miserably. At last it resolved itself into this bald alternative—which way would cause her the least pain—not to meet him, to lose him forever now, at the very beginning, to destroy this promise of the first interest any man had yet shown in her—or to let it go on, to let her starved and ardent affection rush out to him, to become fatally entangled in the web of her own making, only to have him find her out and despise her?

She went into the kitchen to get ready the breakfast, and in there, a back room looking out over little yards, the sun was beginning to enter. She could see a soft blue morning sky, with shadowy white clouds blown across it by a mild and steady wind. It cheered her marvellously. She was as easily made happy as she was easily hurt.

She started to grind the coffee, in itself a cheerful morning noise.

“Oh, nonsense!” she said to herself. “I’m making a mountain out of a molehill. Of course I’ll go and meet him. Why shouldn’t I? It’s just a lark. It won’t lead to anything, if I don’t want it to. There’s no need for me to be so serious about it. I’m *going!*”

She was well used to keeping her own counsel.

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She looked and she acted just the same as usual; when Miss Amy appeared she found breakfast on the table, as it should be, and Rosaleen occupying a few spare moments in dusting.

“Good morning, Miss Amy!” she said, in her gentle, her almost meek little voice.

Miss Amy answered curtly, and looked into the kitchen to see if all was in order. She was a stout grey haired woman with a face as dark as a gypsy's and a long, sharp—an almost wolfish, nose. She had a perpetual smile, a smile which she had schooled her lips to assume, in her terrible efforts to subdue her own fierce nature. She was a woman of natural ferocity and violence, but controlled and dominated by a passionate desire to be good. So well did she rule herself that she very rarely spoke a sharp word, and though she had a deep-rooted and unshakable dislike for Rosaleen, she treated her with generosity. She made her work; that, she considered, was good for her, and in every way fitting and proper. But she likewise considered that she and her brother were morally responsible for this girl, and she paid out of her own pocket for Art Lessons, for an occasional Shakespearian matinée and other items of cultural importance.

Anyone who has experienced it will admit how immeasurably painful is the combination of hostility

and gratitude. Rosaleen was obliged by her own heart to dislike Miss Amy, and by her soul to recognise her benefactions. They were in all things opposed and hostile. Rosaleen was a fool possessed of common sense and Miss Amy was a practical woman without any.

Rosaleen brought in Miss Amy's little dish of prunes.

"Anything I can do for you downtown to-day, Miss Amy?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, of course! It's your lesson day. No, thank you, Rosaleen, there is nothing."

Mr. Humbert now appeared to be fed. He ate, pretending to be absent minded so that no one should bother him about anything, and went away to his office. Then Miss Amy began leisurely to get herself ready to go to market, while Rosaleen washed the dishes and made the beds.

"You'd better hurry!" she said. "You'll be late, Rosaleen!"

But Rosaleen was only waiting for her to be gone, so that she could put on her best blouse and her white gloves.

II

Miss JULIE had always encouraged Rosaleen's fondness for drawing. In fact, it may have been

the drawing lessons she had given the little girl and her fervent talk of "art" which had given Rosaleen the idea of becoming an artist. But, whether the ambition was implanted by nature or by Miss Julie, the ability was born with her. She had an undoubted facility. In the long hours she had spent alone in the flat, she had comforted herself with her little talent, copying the covers of magazines and inventing romances around the imbecile beauties. And as time went on, and her companions at school admired her work, her pride and her hope increased. She saw in this career as an artist a chance of escape, for freedom.

When she was graduated from the High School, at eighteen, she said that she should like to study art seriously. Miss Amy had agreed at once, and Rosaleen had then showed her an advertisement in the Sunday paper which she had noticed for some weeks.

EUROPEAN ART TEACHER would accept one or two more young lady pupils. Very moderate terms. Address F. W.

They had addressed F. W., and in the due course of time received a letter signed "Faith Waters," inviting them to call the next afternoon at four. They had discovered the European Art Teacher living in a dark, old-fashioned flat on Tenth Street, with one light room at the back which she had made into a

studio by filling it with plaster casts on crooked shelves put up by her own hands. The teacher herself was a withered little woman in a crushed and dusty brown dress, with a black velvet bow in her cottony white hair, and she had the cultured voice of one who has been to Europe.

Rosaleen looked about at the photographs on the walls of various persons in stage costume, signed *A ma chère Miss—Bien à vous*—and so on. She supposed that these were artistic foreign friends of Miss Waters', never suspecting that they were nothing more nor less than second rate stage people to whom she had taught English.

“I suppose you've lived abroad a long time?” said Miss Amy.

“Oh, dear me, yes!” said Miss Waters. “I studied in Brussels for years!”

She didn't explain that this had been thirty years ago, and in a cheap *pension de demoiselles*, and that she had never seen the inside of a foreign art school, or studied under any master except the miserable old man who had taught drawing as an extra to the demoiselles.

“I'll show you some of my work,” she had said. “I haven't a proper place to hang them here. The light is so bad you'll hardly be able to judge. . . . But still. . . .”

She led the way to the dining-room, where her canvases hung in profusion. She specialised in animal life, kittens, puppies, and—timidly—horses. The horses were supernaturally stalwart and spirited, with tremendous chests and heads flung back splendidly, but Miss Waters was conscious of many weak points in them, grave deficiencies. She knew that sweet little kittens were more in her line. Horses were, after all, rather grossly big animals, and she did them only as an exercise in virtuosity.

Rosaleen and Miss Amy had been a trifle disappointed in Miss Waters' work. They both had a feeling that animals were not truly artistic. Flowers, landscapes, women and children, *were* what they had expected and desired. Still, a group of six puppies in a row, astoundingly alike and yet each one in a different attitude, compelled their admiration.

“Of course,” said Miss Waters, “*this* is my real work. The teaching is only a side line. *But I do love* teaching. It is such a wonderful privilege to help in developing a talent. Some of my pupils are among the foremost artists in the country.”

She needn’t have gone on so recklessly, because her visitors were already in quite the frame of mind she desired. That, however, she couldn’t know.

“Portrait painters, landscape painters, painters of

historical and religious subjects. . . . I've taught them all. And I've been—well," she confessed, with a modest smile. "I've been very fortunate, I must say. My pupils are among the most celebrated artists in this country. Not always the best *known*," she hastened to add. "Their *names* might not be familiar to you. . . . But they *rank* very high."

All superfluous. For Rosaleen and Miss Amy the fact of her being an artist sufficed. They took it for granted that any artist knew all about art, just as they would have expected any blacksmith to understand all about horseshoeing. Then and there Rosaleen was put into her hands to be developed.

And she had been going faithfully, three days a week, for nearly two years, progressing steadily under the system which Miss Waters had found successful with her pupils in the past. A great deal of drawing in charcoal from casts at first, then water-colours, and then oils. When you began to work with oils, the drudgery was over; accuracy was no longer required, or outlines. The system also included what Miss Waters called "just a bit of the History of Art," short talks and readings, which contained not a vestige of information about art and some very remarkable history. It was in fact nothing more than a collection of anecdotes about artists. Generally there was a king, who visited the

artist in disguise, or came up behind him on tiptoe, and who was struck dumb by the verisimilitude of the painting before him. That was indeed the measure of an artist's greatness—that a horse tried to eat his painted hay, a bird his fruit, that a man tried to sit upon his picture of a chair, or to smell his flowers. A picture was a picture.

Rosaleen had progressed beyond casts now, and was devoting herself to watercolours. She was learning the Rules of Perspective, and her suspicion was becoming confirmed, that Art was a sort of professional mystery to be learned as one learned law or medicine. She began to feel that she was getting a grasp of the thing.

She was an altogether satisfactory pupil and Miss Waters was proud of her; she was bright, docile, and very industrious.

But what was the matter with her on *this* morning?

She sat before her patient little drawing of a ruined castle on a hilltop, unable to draw a line, making a weak little scratch now and then, and rubbing it out as soon as it had appeared.

“What *is* the trouble, Rosaleen?” asked Miss Waters. “Don’t you feel well?”

“Oh, yes, thank you, Miss Waters! I feel well.

Only . . . I don't know how it is . . . but—I don't feel like drawing a bit to-day."

"I know, my dear child!" said Miss Waters. "I'm the same way myself. It's the beautiful autumn weather. It's hard to concentrate on work. It puts me in mind of my student days, in Brussels."

She sighed. Those long years, in Paris and Brussels, trotting about from one English family to another, teaching drawing, from one jolly demi-mondaine to another, teaching English; the bare little rooms she had shivered in, the dismal *pensions*, the dreadful straits in which she had so often found herself, poor solitary muddle-headed little foreigner! And yet she had loved it, that illusion of an artistic life; friendless and poor as she was, she had had her pleasures, had dined at the little restaurants where she could at least *see* artists, had spent hours and days in the picture galleries, had felt gay and adventurous and irresponsible.

"I'll tell you what, Rosaleen!" she cried suddenly. "Suppose we both go out and take a turn round the square? It might do us both good—freshen our brains!"

Rosaleen looked at the clock. Half past two; her lesson didn't end till three, and she had allowed herself half an hour to get up to the Library. She couldn't think what to say.

Miss Waters believed that she hesitated because she didn't want to waste any of her lesson time.

"We'll go out, just for a 'blow,'" she said. "And then you can come back and work extra late, and we'll have tea together. I haven't any pupils this afternoon."

"But—I have to stop at the Library and get a book for Miss Amy," said Rosaleen. "And—I promised to take it home early."

Miss Waters looked a trifle disappointed.

"Well, then," she said. "Go ahead working until your time's up, and then I'll walk up to the Library with you."

Aghast, horrified, Rosaleen pretended to draw, thinking desperately of some means of getting rid of Miss Waters. While all the time she could hear Miss Waters getting ready, scrabbling about in her bedroom, dropping things, and hunting for other things in bureau drawers. Presently she came out, and in spite of the mild October day, she was wearing her dreadful old sealskin coat with the high, puffed shoulders that made her look so huddled, and perched high on her cottony hair, the small fur hat that always blew off. It was always an infliction for Rosaleen to walk with this poor old scarecrow, and on this day it was nothing short of torture.

Sedately, arm in arm, they walked along Tenth

Street and turned up Fifth Avenue, Miss Waters leaning heavily upon Rosaleen and chattering with youthful exuberance, roguishly aware of the glances that followed her. And her hat did blow off, and bowled along ahead of them, like a dusty, terrified little animal, until a man stopped it with his foot and with disdain and in silence returned it to the dishevelled artist. She thanked him, giggling, gathering her cottony hair in both hands to stuff it back under the hat.

"I thought I had a pin in it," she explained.

After this, she looked wilder than ever, and the rough October wind swirling about her skirts revealed a hole in each of her stockings. And presently she gave a dismayed shriek, and clutched her sealskin coat about her.

"Oh!" she cried. "The button's just come off!"

"What button?" asked Rosaleen.

"The button on my coat. Have you a pin, my dear?"

"I'm sorry, but I haven't. Does it matter much?"

"Of course! How can I keep my coat together?" Miss Waters demanded, plaintively.

"But—you must have more than *one* button!"

"No, I really didn't bother about sewing on the others. . . . Oh! . . . My hat!"

And as she grasped after the hat with both hands

the coat flew wide open, to reveal its tattered rose coloured lining, hanging in shreds, and the crushed and dusty old dress.

"Hadn't we better go back?" said Rosaleen. "And I'll come in and sew your coat for you."

Anything would be better than to meet *him* with this companion; better to lose him forever.

"Oh, no, thank you, my dear. As long as I've gone this far, I'll go the rest of the way. I'll fix it in the library."

So there was no escape possible. Arm in arm with Miss Waters she must ascend the imposing flight of steps, enter the library, and advance along the lofty corridors.

She saw him! Sitting on a bench, reading a magazine with a sort of severe preoccupation. But Rosaleen knew that he had seen them and was only pretending he hadn't. They drew nearer and nearer. She was thinking frantically. Should she speak to him *anyway*, or was he annoyed at her for coming with Miss Waters? Or was he simply being tactful, desiring to avoid embarrassing her with his unsanctioned presence? She couldn't decide. They drew nearer and nearer . . . they were abreast of him. . . . She threw him one anguished glance, but he did not look up from his magazine. . . . They passed him, and went into the circulating room.

This was too awful!

“Would you just please ask if they have ‘Some Colonial Chairs?’” she cried hastily to Miss Waters.

“I think I see someone I know . . .”

And rushed out. But he was no longer sitting on the bench. She caught a glimpse of him, vanishing round the corner.

She went back to Miss Waters, and had to carry home a huge, heavy volume which she remembered Miss Amy having had from the library some years ago.

She got into the bus with it, waved a cheerful good-bye to Miss Waters, and went off home.

CHAPTER FOUR

I

SHE was lost in an apathy of despair. He had come and he had gone, this lover for whom she had been waiting for years. In all her solitude, her restlessness, her great discontent, that had been her great hope; any day she might meet him, any day it might happen, and her life would really begin at last.

And now it was over; he was gone, and there was nothing further to expect. She let herself into the flat—her home—her prison—her grave.

There was a great bolt of white stuff lying folded on the sewing machine to be made up into respectable and sturdy underclothing for Miss Amy. After she had taken off her hat and jacket and washed her hands, she sat down before this work, which she usually attacked with such earnestness, such professional interest. But her heart failed; she let the scissors drop idly in her lap; to-day she could not work, to-day she didn't care. Her sombre eyes stared straight before her, at the transparency of moonlit Venice.

"Oh! . . . If I'd been alone, we'd have taken a walk together . . . I'd have had a chance to be—attractive. . . . Now, of course, I'll never see him again. How can I? I don't know where he lives. . . . He'll never bother with me any more. Why should he? Of course, he knows lots and lots of beautiful society girls. . . ."

She sat there, thinking of the charming women he must see every day, and who must of course all love him. She was sure that he knew dozens of girls prettier, more accomplished, a hundred times more fascinating than herself. And yet felt sure that if she had a proper chance, she could win him, felt that there was some peculiar quality in her which was in no other living woman.

The afternoon dragged by in a weary and painful waking dream. She hurried through the preparations for dinner, resentful of anything that distracted her long reveries. Nothing else held the slightest interest for her. If she *could* get him back? If she would ever see him again? If the beneficent Fate which had brought him to her would still direct the thing, would help her once again?

They sat at the table, they talked, their usual constrained and formal talk. Then Miss Amy went out and her brother returned to his room and his great work—his romance of the time of Nero.

Rosaleen really admired it, without any particular interest in it. And she felt a very feminine satisfaction that the man in the house had found for himself an occupation which kept him quiet, and out of the way. Every evening for years he had shut himself into his room directly after dinner, to write. He had begun this romance when he had first come to the city, but he did not progress rapidly, for he had often to interrupt its course while he studied. His studying consisted in reading "Quo Vadis" and "Ben Hur" and dozens and dozens of other novels of the same sort, and making diagrams of their plots, according to a scheme he had adopted from his well-read manual—"The Road to Authorship." On large sheets of paper he drew a wavering curve upward to the Climax, then down, then perhaps up again two or three times, for all the little anti-climaxes. Each character had its own wavering line, leading up and down, crossing or running parallel to the "main theme." In a big exercise book he kept an index of the characters he had most admired in all these novels, with little sketches of their histories, traits, etc.

He now felt altogether familiar with that epoch. He knew just the proper set of characters for the scene, a Christian slave girl, a gigantic, faithful and muscular porter, a humourous pariah, and so on,

and all the unfortunate crew of pious and humble folk predestined from the first chapter for martyrdom. A romantic work, for Mr. Humbert was romantic, in a masculine way, you must know, about facts, not about people.

He enjoyed this literary work with immeasurable relish. It completely distracted his mind from his business, from his home, from Life. He didn't care much for Life. It was too rough, too complicated, too large. He was glad also to forget about his sister, whom he dreaded, and Rosaleen, who worried him by her helplessness. She was a good, kind girl, but he hadn't much of an opinion of her. Uninteresting. . . . Her only hope lay in marrying a decent, respectable man who would look after her, and her chance of finding and securing such a man seemed to Mr. Humbert very remote.

He heard her stirring about in the kitchen, alone in there, washing the dinner things. He shook his venerable head.

“Poor Rosaleen!” he said, with a sigh.

II

ROSALEEN had, in her long exile, cultivated a demeanour, an expression which was quite unfathomable by her housemates. She had a sort of

meek and lowly grace, so much the air of the grateful child rescued from poverty, that it never occurred to them to regard her as anything but this regulation type. Miss Amy had seen others of the same sort in the course of her charitable labours. Of course, Rosaleen was grateful, or, as Miss Amy preferred to put it, appreciative; how could she logically be anything else? Miss Amy was not aware that in Rosaleen there was no logic, no reason, and it must be admitted, very little justice. She was completely composed of feeling. She had a perpetual resentment against the Humberts which no sense of obligation could assuage. She passionately preferred her frequently intoxicated and always avaricious mother; although Miss Amy was undeniably a good woman and her mother was no more and no less than a human being. Self-interest was absolutely lacking in Rosaleen. She cared not a whit what you did for her, or could do for her. She had an inexhaustible fund of devotion, of intense and absurd affection, but it was not to be bought, it was not even to be won. She had pity, mercy, compassion beyond measure, but it went only by favour.

And she had a limitless fortitude. She was not a fighter; she was not one to struggle for what she desired; her strength was in her terrible resignation,

her fatalistic endurance. She would weep—she was weeping now—for this probable lover whom she had lost, but there was no rebellion in her grief. From her very early days she had learned to look upon life as a sad and ironic affair, from which one could expect little.

“Ah, that’s the way of the world!” her mother would say, but always of some disaster.

And it was no doubt the way of the world that this had happened.

III

WHEN Friday came she didn’t go to Miss Waters’. She had not intended to tell Miss Amy she wasn’t going, but to her dismay Miss Amy suddenly returned at noon, and found her playing on the piano, one of the babyish pieces of her small repertory, taught her by Miss Julie: “The Brownies’ Ball.” Small consolation in that sprightly little tune for a suffering heart, but it was all the music she could make, and she needed music.

“What are you doing at home?” asked Miss Amy. “Isn’t it your day for going to Miss Waters’?”

“I don’t feel well,” said Rosaleen. “I have a headache.”

“Then you’d better lie down, instead of sitting drumming on the piano.”

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"I feel better when I'm sitting up, Miss Amy."

"I dare say you're bilious. Put on your things and go take a good brisk walk."

"I don't feel a bit like taking a walk!" Rosaleen protested, but in vain.

"All the more reason for going!" said Miss Amy. "That sluggishness is a symptom. Run along now!"

She stood by grimly while the miserable and reluctant girl got ready and went out. Then she went into the kitchen for a glass of water, and she saw hanging up on a rack one of her blouses, beautifully laundered that morning by the child who said she had a headache. It hung before her, soft, lustrous, every little gather in place, the collar so crisp and smooth, the embroidery standing out in fine relief. It looked like . . . Did it look like a reproach?

IV

SATURDAY followed, a busy day, devoted to house-cleaning. Rosaleen swept and dusted and cleaned, took down curtains, beat rugs and sofa cushions, and baked a cake, all according to custom. And Sunday, too, passed as it always did. They all went to church in the morning, and spent the afternoon in dignified drowsiness. Even Rosaleen was affected; she sat in the front room with them, reading a book, but near the window, so that from time

to time, when there was an interesting sound of footsteps or voices, she could look out into the street. So many couples going by, arm in arm. . . .

On Monday she was quite ready to go to Miss Waters' again. Art had lost its charm, to be sure, but it was something after all. Very little compared to Love, but a great deal when compared to solitary confinement.

She went into the studio and sat down before her still unfinished landscape, opened her paint box, and tried to begin her work.

"Is that you, Rosaleen?" called a cheerful voice from the bedroom.

"Yes, Miss Waters."

"You naughty girl!"

"I know it. . . . I'm sorry I didn't come down on Friday. But . . ."

"My dear! I was young once myself! I don't blame you, not the least bit in the world. I don't blame you for forgetting all about work! He's *perfectly* charming!"

"Who!" cried Rosaleen.

"Oh, I know all about it!" said Miss Waters archly. "That nice young man of yours. You know that day we went to the library together? Well . . . He came tearing after me as I was walking down Fifth Avenue, and he asked me if you'd

gone home. . . . The most beautiful manners, my dear! . . . A real Southern gentleman! . . . He was so disappointed when he found you'd gone. He said he'd seen us go *in*, and he was waiting for us to come *out*. And he walked all the way down here with me, talking about you all the time. And I said why didn't he go to call on you? And he said he would—that very evening."

"Oh! . . . Miss Waters!"

The desperation in her voice startled the European Art Teacher. She came out of her bedroom, still fastening the crooked little "vestee" of her brown dress.

"Did you miss him?" she asked, anxiously.

"He never came!"

"That's queer! He said he would. . . . He sat down and talked—the longest time. . . . No one could have been nicer. . . . He asked all sorts of questions about you."

"Well, what did you *tell* him?" cried Rosaleen.
"He never came!"

Miss Waters sat down and thought, with a deep frown.

"My dear, it couldn't have been anything I said. Not possibly. I didn't speak of you except as an artist. I said how talented you were. And what a lovely disposition you had. Nothing else at all."

No one could have better appreciated the situation than Miss Waters, no one could have better understood the need for the most extreme care and caution in dealing with men. The poor defrauded creature was convinced that at least three of the so-called "disappointments" of her past had come from trifling mistakes she had made, minute errors of judgment which had frightened away the elusive and fastidious male. Her eyes filled with tears.

"My dear!" she said. "I hope there's no misunderstanding! So many young people have had their lives absolutely wrecked and ruined by misunderstandings."

Rosaleen shook her head.

"No," she said. "There isn't any misunderstanding. There couldn't be. . . . But I don't understand it."

She picked up her brushes and began to paint, and Miss Waters, to keep her company, sat down before her easel, to put the finishing touches to a copy she was making of one of her earlier works—"The School," she had called it, five puppies and five kittens, some in dunces' caps, some wearing spectacles. She was aware that she could no longer conceive and execute such paintings now, she had to be satisfied with imitations of her past virtuosity.

Absorbed in their dismal reflections, they scarcely

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noticed the flight of time. Miss Waters looked up startled when the clock struck one.

“One o’clock!” she observed. “I never imagined! Rosaleen, you must stay and have lunch with me!”

Rosaleen had nothing on earth to go home for, so she agreed, and the hospitable Miss Waters rushed out to the French delicatessen nearby, where she could buy curious and economical things.

And whom should she see on the corner but that young man, standing there patiently! She came up behind him, cautiously as a hunter stalking a deer, and touched him on the arm.

“Well!” she cried, in pretended surprise. “Mr. Landry!”

She knew that he was waiting for Rosaleen, but she knew also that he wouldn’t like her to know that. Oh, she did understand something of men! She knew that his pride must be saved at any cost. So, when she saw a bus drawing near, she pretended to believe that he was about to get into it, and entreated him not to.

“Oh, don’t get in!” she cried. “I wish you’d just stop in at my studio and have a little lunch with Rosaleen and me. You’re not in too much of a hurry, are you?”

He smiled down at the dishevelled and anxious creature with streaming white hair—like a witch, he

thought. He was pleased that she thought he had been waiting for the bus, and he was very glad that neither she nor anyone else knew that he had waited there on that corner on Friday as well, remembering what he had been told were the days and hours of Rosaleen's lessons. And he was delighted that he could see Rosaleen and pretend that it was accidental. He was surprised and a little ashamed at his own longing to see her, by this feeling which he could not deny or resist, for a girl of whom he knew nothing.

"I'd be very pleased," he said. And turned and walked down the street, with Miss Waters hanging on his arm, both pockets of her famous fur coat bulging with delicatessen.

"How is your work coming on?" he asked Miss Waters. "The School?" The one you showed me?"

"Oh!" she cried, archly, delighted at his remembering. "The idea! I haven't done much more on it since then. However, I'll show you."

She led him down the hall, and at the door of her flat turned, with a finger at her lips.

"Surprise her!" she whispered.

Landry followed her to the studio and stood obediently quiet on the threshold, to contemplate his unconscious Rosaleen. And became lost, absorbed in looking at her.

She seemed so much younger, like a school girl, in her sailor blouse, with her fair, untidy hair and her serious preoccupation with her work. How dear she was! How innocent and fine and lovely!

"Rosaleen!" called Miss Waters, in a voice trembling with excitement.

Rosaleen glanced up, to meet the serious and unsmiling regard of her hero.

They were both confused, embarrassed, almost alarmed; their eyes met in a glance singularly bold and significant, belying their formal smiles, their casual words.

"I missed you the other day," said Landry.

"I know . . . I was sorry . . . I had to hurry home. . . ."

He crossed the room and stood beside her, looking down at her drawing.

"It's very pretty," he said, with constraint.
"What is it for?"

"Oh! . . . Just a picture!"

Miss Waters had been watching them like a stage director.

"Sit down, Mr. Landry!" she said.

"I don't like to interrupt Miss Humbert's work. . . ."

"Nonsense! She's a very good pupil, you know, and she can afford to take a little holiday, now and

then. And you're going to stay and have a little lunch with us, aren't you?"

He yielded, because he hadn't the heart to do as he wished—to ask Rosaleen out to lunch and leave the poor old creature behind.

"I'll have something nice and tasty ready in a jiffy!" she cried. "Rosaleen, you entertain Mr. Landry!"

They were left alone, Landry standing beside Rosaleen, both of them speechless. He looked stealthily down at her, at her light hair, at the soft colour in her cheeks, at her pretty childish throat rising from the open neck of her sailor blouse. And he bent down and kissed her cheek.

She didn't look up; she bent lower over her work.

"Rosaleen!" he said. "You darling!"

"I'm awfully glad to see you!" she murmured. "I thought . . ."

"What did you think?"

"I thought—perhaps I shouldn't ever see you again."

"I had to come," he said, truthfully, "I couldn't help it."

And fell silent, startled by his own words, by his own course of conduct, so altogether different from what he had planned. He had particularly wished to avoid seeing Rosaleen alone. He had certainly

not expected to kiss her, or to want to kiss her. He walked across the room and pretended to be looking at Miss Waters' picture. He was ashamed of himself; he had no business to kiss her; it was dis honourable and unkind. He stole a glance at her, and saw her, still bending over her work, but with flaming cheeks and a hand that trembled. He couldn't bear that! He strode over to her.

"I'm sorry!" he cried.

Of course she didn't answer; he didn't expect her to.

"Please let me come to see you!" he went on. "I want to know you better. . . . I'll tell you all about myself. . . ."

"Oh, no!" she cried. "I can't! Really I can't! I can't have anyone! I'm sorry, but—I can't!"

"But—can't I see you again, then? Don't you—won't you let me . . . ?

"Yes, I do want to see you," she answered candidly. "Only—not at home. Can't we meet somewhere?"

"But don't you see?" he said with an earnest scowl. "It—it isn't the thing. If you'll let me come to your house, and—more or less explain myself, it makes everything quite different. If I could see your parents. . . ."

"I—they aren't my parents. It's—an uncle.

... But—what could I tell them, anyway? If I said I'd met you like that, on the bus——”

“I quite understand that. But you could say that you'd met me here at Miss Waters'. You have, you know. It would be true.”

“No!” she protested, with such vehemence that he was startled. “I can't let you come. I'll meet you somewhere——”

“Look here!” he said, severely. “You can't—it's not the thing for a girl like you to be meeting a man on street corners, like a servant girl.”

Her face grew scarlet.

“Very well!” she cried. “You needn't see me at all then!”

He retreated instantly before her wrath.

“All right!” he said, hastily. “I *will* meet you—anywhere you like.”

“Oh, no you won't! . . . I'm not going to . . .” A sudden loud sob interrupted her. “. . . not—like—a servant girl. . . .”

He was horrified at the sight of tears in her eyes.

“I didn't mean that!” he cried. “Please don't! Please don't! I think you—you're perfect!”

And before he knew it, his arm was about her shoulder, and her head pressed against his chest, a clumsy, a boyish embrace.

“Don't cry, darling!” he entreated.

She remained motionless. And with a respectful hand he touched her hair.

"Please meet me!" he said.

"In the library—on Wednesday—at four."

She didn't ask; she commanded. And he submitted.

v

MISS WATERS entered with the lunch on a tray, and young Landry sprang to assist her. He was, Rosaleen observed, remarkably nice and tactful with Miss Waters. He ate what she had provided and praised it. Afterward she brought out a white china flower pot half filled with moist, bent cigarettes, and offered him one; took one herself, too, though it caused her to cough horribly and would very likely make her sick. However, it gave a European touch. She was enchanted with the atmosphere, to find herself nonchalantly smoking cigarettes in a studio in the company of a young and attractive man.

She had a rhapsody of praise for him after he had gone, and Rosaleen listened to it with delight. Then she too went home. She was proud, triumphant, exultant. But it was a most perilous joy; she dared not examine it. Those words haunted

her. She mustn't meet him on street corners—like a servant girl.

She was dusting the top of Mr. Humbert's desk.

"What else am I?" she asked herself, with terrible bitterness. "They talk about my 'advantages,' and my being a 'member of the household' . . . But what am I really?"

She flung down the cloth.

"Oh, what's the use!" she cried. "It might just as well end now, better end now—than after he finds out."

CHAPTER FIVE

I

ROSALEEN's great mistake lay in not telling him *then*. Because at this time he wouldn't have cared. At this moment she was still a romantic and thrilling figure, not yet quite flesh and blood, still without flaw or fault. Her pitiful history would only have enslaved him more completely. And as he grew to know her better, he would have known her with this fact, this history in his mind. Whereas, on the contrary, he was beginning to love a girl who did not exist.

He saw her transcendent kindness, her absolute lack of egoism, her rare and lovely spirit, but he called it and he thought of it as ladylike delicacy. It was her soul; he thought it was her manners.

He walked all the way home, reflecting upon her, lost in a reverie half troubled, half delightful. A sweet, a wonderful girl—but obstinate. And obstinacy he did not like. He was the most outrageous young tyrant who ever lived. He ruled everyone, he always had ruled everyone. His mother had never thwarted him, his sister had never rebelled;

whatever friends he had selected in school and college had followed his lead with satisfactory submissiveness. He had the qualities of a leader; the immense self-assurance, the severe determination to get his own way, and he had that magic idea in his mind, which subtly communicates itself and changes the very atmosphere, which entralls all minds more sensitive and therefore less positive—that idea of his own superiority. He came of an old Carolina family, and he believed himself to be better born than anyone about him; he had been successful in his studies, and he believed himself to be cleverer than anyone about him. Appearance didn't trouble him; he didn't think himself handsome, and he didn't care. He knew very well that he was attractive, and that people liked him. Even the fact of being poor didn't bother him. He wouldn't stay so.

So, lordly and thoughtful, in his shabby overcoat and his worn shoes, he mounted the steps of the imposing house in which he was living—his aunt's house. She had begged him to live there until he was "settled." He had consented; he didn't feel under obligations; he thought it was nice of her, but her duty. He would have been glad, in her place, to help a young Landry to get on his feet.

A respectful Negro butler opened the door, and he entered and went up to his own room—a hand-

some and well-furnished room, with bureaus and wardrobe and chest of drawers all lamentably empty. In the huge closet hung only a decent suit of evening clothes and some white flannel trousers, and in two of the bureau drawers lay piles of shirts and underwear which his aunt herself mended and mended. She wouldn't have so much as suggested replenishing his stock; he would have felt himself grossly insulted.

He had left his beloved mother and sister in Charleston, where they were living with difficulty on a very small pension, and he took from them only an incredibly small sum, enough for carfares and that sort of thing, until he could be earning something. But though waiting was hard for them and hard for him, he would not be hurried. Until he could find a place which seemed to him advantageous, he would take nothing. He knew what he was about. Now was his chance, and perhaps his only chance, to look about him. He intended to make a good start, to go into a business in which he could stop. Let him only see an opportunity; he asked no more.

This evening his plan for the future was changed and enlarged. It contained, as always, lavish provision for his mother and sister, but it included

Rosaleen. In the course of the next few years he was going to marry her.

He had, however, too much sense to mention anything of this, to hint at the existence of a Rosaleen, in that household. It wouldn't be gallant. He was supposed to admire his cousin Caroline; not to the point of compromising himself; everyone knew he wasn't in love with her. But while living there and seeing her every day, it wouldn't, he felt, be polite to fall openly in love with someone else.

His aunt was a woman whom he thoroughly admired. Possessed of a gracious and charming worldliness, she had nevertheless the most severe morals, the most rigid code. She didn't like New York or its people; she was shocked at almost everything; she said the women weren't ladies and the men weren't chivalrous; that the people altogether were vulgar and "fast." But, she said, she was obliged to live there for the sake of Caroline's studies. It wasn't really quite that; however, her intention was natural and praiseworthy, and she did her best to accomplish her unspoken ambition for her child.

Nick Landry enjoyed living there. It was a well-appointed and well-managed home, with an air of perpetual festivity. There were always young men about, and theatre parties and dinner parties and little dances—all the charmed atmosphere of a

home with a young girl in it. Mrs. Allanby had known how to make the place agreeable, even fascinating for young men. That was her part; to provide Caroline with a matchless setting. To see Caroline sitting at the piano, under a lamp with a shade of artfully selected tint, charmingly dressed, and singing in a voice a bit colourless but so well bred; to know that there would be punch—not too much of it, for Mrs. Allanby was vigilant,—sandwiches and cakes such as no one else ever had; and an air of flattering attention, an enveloping hospitality—wasn't that a deadly snare? And Nick was the privileged guest, the man of the house. Of course he liked it!

So that evening while he sat there listening to Caroline sing, and thinking all the time of Rosaleen, he felt almost treacherous. And just a little proud of his well-concealed secret. He felt that his dark face was inscrutable. . . .

Perhaps, he thought, at that very instant, Rosaleen too was sitting at the piano in her home.

II

It was one of Nick's old-fashioned ideas—that a man must always be the first to appear at a tryst, must unfailingly be found waiting by the beloved

woman when she arrived. He had made a point of being at least fifteen minutes in advance of the appointed time, so that Rosaleen should see him there, in chivalrous if somewhat irritable patience. He was always ready to wait for a woman, to defer to her, to serve her; he believed it to be his duty as a gentleman; and yet so fierce and haughty was his spirit that he was never without an inward resentment.

He was waiting for her now in the corridor of the Fifth Avenue library. It was a wet October afternoon; he sat on a stone bench with his coat collar still turned up, the brim of his hat still turned down, just as he had come in from the street. He hadn't even taken off his tan gloves, soaked black by the rain; he didn't care how he looked, and he knew Rosaleen wouldn't care either. He had certainly not the look of an expectant lover, this lean and shabby young man with his haughty glance, his ready-made overcoat too large for him, his big rubber overshoes over old and shapeless boots. And yet more than one girl stole a glance at him.

Quarter of an hour late! He only wished that he could smoke. He was beginning to feel chilly, too, and terribly depressed. Wet people going past him and past him, some alone, some in couples, treading and talking quietly. He regarded them

with morose interest. All of them after books! . . . Hadn't he too tried to live that way, vicariously, through books? All very well as a substitute; but there came back to him now, very vividly, the bitter restlessness, the torment that would seize him when he read of some enchanting foreign land, of fierce and desperate adventures. Of course he knew that his life wouldn't be, and couldn't be, at all like any other life ever lived in this world; and yet, in spite of his faith in his own destiny, he fretted so, he chafed so at these slow years, these hours so wasted. What was the matter? Why didn't life begin?

He was pleased enough with this romance with Rosaleen. This was quite as good as anything in books. Only, to be really perfect, love should have been mixed up with peril, with terror, with gallant rescues. It should have been a drama, and it was nothing but an emotion. He was still so young that he could not imagine death; it seemed to him inevitable that he should live and that Rosaleen should live, until they were old—granted, of course, the absurd premise that young people really *do* become old. He saw no shadow over life, no fear of change or loss.

He stirred uneasily. Twenty minutes late! This was abusing her feminine privilege! Doubly unfor-

tunate, too, because he had come prepared to remonstrate with Rosaleen, and the longer she kept him waiting, the chillier and damper he grew, the more severe would the remonstrance be.

At last he saw her coming, and her sweetness almost disarmed him. And then made him even more severe. A girl like that, to be meeting a man about in public places! A girl so pretty, so charming, that people stared at her. . . . The damp air and her haste had given her a lovely colour, and as she hurried toward him, he found for her a pitifully time-worn simile which nevertheless struck him as startlingly novel and true—she was like a wild rose.

She had very little “style”; her clothes were rather cheap, he observed. But she was superlatively ladylike, refined, modest. He wouldn’t have had anything changed, from her sturdy little boots to her plain dark hat.

He rose and came toward her, hat in hand, and for a moment they looked at each other, speechlessly.

“Suppose we have tea?” he said, at last. “There’s a nice place near here where they have very good waffles.”

“I’m not a bit hungry,” said Rosaleen.

Nick was. He had gone without lunch in order to have enough money for tea.

"You ought to be, at your age," he said.

"It isn't age that makes you hungry," said Rosaleen. "It's what you've had for lunch."

Nick said no more, but took her by the arm. And was surprised and shocked to feel how fragile an arm it was. He determined that she should eat a great deal.

He stopped near the door to reclaim their umbrellas, and they went out together into the chilly and misty twilight. The crowds on Fifth Avenue jostled them, but Nick, tall and grim, held his umbrella high over Rosaleen's head, and led her to the quiet little tea room he had selected.

"Now, then!" he said, when they were seated opposite each other at a small table, and tea and waffles and honey had been ordered. And he began.

He told her first of all what was expected of a young girl:

By the world in general.

By men.

By himself.

He told her how easy it was to be misjudged.

And how serious.

Then he told her how he particularly didn't want *her* to be misjudged.

"You *must* let me come to see you in your own home!" he said. "You're so young that you don't realize how indiscreet and—how dangerous it is to be meeting a strange man this way. You don't know anything about me. And you ought to. I want you to. There isn't anything I want to—to conceal. I want you to know me and all about me. And I want to know all about you."

Once more he was horribly disturbed at seeing her eyes fill with tears. He leaned across the table.

"Look here!" he assured her. "Please! Don't care! Don't imagine that—if there's anything you think I might . . ."

He didn't know how to proceed. He stopped a moment, frowning, to arrange his ideas.

"I don't care *where* you live, or *how* you live, or *what* your people are," he said. "It can't make any difference to me. It's only for your sake. I wish you'd believe me. It's only because it's not fair to you to go on meeting you like this. Because I mean to go on. I'm *going* to see you. And I want it to be in your home. Please let me, Rosaleen."

It was the first time he had used her name.

"Please let me!" he entreated.

She gave up. She told him yes, to-morrow evening; for Miss Amy would not be home then.

III

IT was a nice, respectable house in a quiet street below Morningside Park. He was agreeably surprised at its respectability, for he had scented a mystery in Rosaleen's reluctance to have him come—great poverty, perhaps, or a disreputable relative. He went into the vestibule, and looked for the bell. There it was—Humbert—; he rang; the door clicked, and he entered. An old-fashioned house, the carpeted halls were dark and stuffy; he climbed up and up, and on the fourth landing there stood Rosaleen.

She was very pale, and the hand she held out to him was cold as ice. An altogether unfamiliar Rosaleen, silent, even, it struck him, a *desperate* girl. She led him into the dining room.

“Excuse me just a moment!” she said. “I’ll tell —my uncle—you’re here.”

And vanished, leaving him alone. He looked about him with interest, because it was Rosaleen’s home. And he was sorry that it was such a stuffy and unlovely one. He was used to large rooms and fine old furniture, to a sort of dignity and fineness in living. This dining room, with its swarm of decorations, the crowded pictures, the scrawny plants, the flimsy and ugly varnished furniture, the sewing ma-

chine, the dark red paper on the walls, distressed him. He sat down on one of the straight chairs against the wall to wait, trying to imagine his fair Rosaleen in this setting.

In the meantime Rosaleen had hurried to knock at the door of Mr. Humbert's room.

"Mr. Morton!" she murmured. "Here's a young man—a—a friend of Miss Waters. . . . Would you like to come out and see him?"

"Presently," the dignified voice replied, and Rosaleen hastened back.

"He'll be in presently," she repeated to Nick, as she returned. He had risen when she entered, and once more he took her hand. Her nervousness, her distress, filled him with pity.

"Isn't there anyone else? Do you live all alone with your uncle?"

"Oh, no! There's . . . there's—a—cousin . . . But she's out. . . . Won't you sit down?"

When he had done so, she fetched him a book from a little table.

"Would you like to look at some views?" she asked.

"No," said Nick, smiling. "I wouldn't."

"Would you like to play cards?"

"No! I'd rather talk to you!"

She sat down on the edge of the couch—that

couch covered with green corduroy, with *nine* sofa cushions of the most frightful sort.

Now Nick unconsciously expected a girl to do the talking, and the pleasing and the entertaining. Gallant responses were his part. So he waited, but quite in vain, for Rosaleen had no tradition of entertaining, and no experience. Never before had she sat in that room with a young man.

"Have you any of your work here?" he asked, at last, in despair.

"Just those!" she answered, pointing to the transparencies. "There isn't any place for me to draw here."

"Very pretty!" said Nick. "Are you going to be a professional artist?"

"I hope so. It takes years, though."

She was silent for a moment; then she went on, dejectedly:

"Sometimes I think I never will succeed. I don't seem to improve. And I love it so——"

"Don't take it so seriously."

"I have to. I've got to earn a living by it."

"I don't believe you'll ever have to earn your living," said Nick. "Not a girl as—lovely as you."

She blushed painfully, even her neck grew scarlet. And he felt his own face grow hot.

"I . . ." he began. "There are sure to be plenty of men who'll want to do that for you."

There was a distressing silence. He found it very hard to keep from saying:

"I will! I'm going to work for you, and get you everything in the world you want, darling wild rose!"

And to divert his mind from this dangerous thought, he rose and picked up the book she had had in her hand.

"Are these the 'views'?" he asked. "Looks very interesting. . . . Won't you show them to me?"

And he sat down beside her on the couch. He really didn't think it a particularly significant or daring thing to do; he had sat beside a great many other girls; he was neither impudent nor presumptuous, and no one ever had objected or seemed at all disturbed. So that he was surprised at Rosaleen's agitation. He didn't know how formidable he was to her; how mysterious, how irresistible. Her hands shook as she took the book of views and opened it.

But, before she had spoken a single word, the sound of a脚步 in the hall made her jump up and seat herself in a nearby chair with her book, and none too soon, for the curtains parted and a venerable, grey-bearded old gentleman looked in.

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“Won’t you come in?” said Rosaleen, while Nick got up.

The old gentleman advanced and held out his hand to Nick with a scholarly sort of smile.

“*Good* evening, sir!” he said. “I was sorry not to have welcomed you with somewhat greater cordiality when you first came in, but I was hard at my work.”

“Not at all!” Nick murmured.

“And that sort of work makes its demands, I can tell you! They who know not speak lightly of ‘writing,’ as of a pleasant diversion; but we initiated ones. . . .! The evening is the only time that I can confidently claim as my own, so you will understand that I dare not waste a moment of the Muse’s presence.”

Which, considering that the poor old chap had acquired all his scholarship alone and unaided, and after he was more or less mature, was a creditable speech. But young Landry, *not* knowing the circumstances, was not impressed. He said, “Certainly!”

“I suppose Rosaleen has told you something of my literary labours?” he enquired, “A romance of the time of Nero. A poor thing, I dare say, but mine own. And, whether or not it takes the public

fancy, it has at least served to beguile many weary hours for its creator."

This was out of his preface; a bit he was very fond of.

"I don't know whether you are a student of history, sir," the old gentleman went on. "But if the subject interests you at all, I have some exceedingly interesting pictures—views of the Holy Land, which I should be very pleased to show you."

"Thank you very much," said Nick. "I should like to see them—some time. But I'm afraid I can't wait now. . . ."

The scholar shook his head.

"My dear sir," he said, smiling. "I certainly did not propose to begin so extensive an undertaking at the present hour. It would take you half a day to assimilate the material I have on hand. I thought only to introduce you to the subject, to give you—as one might say—a glimpse of the glories to come."

He crossed the room and picked up the very book Rosaleen had laid down.

"This is our starting point," he said. "It is from this quaint little old world village that my very dear friend, the Reverend Nathan Peters, set out on his remarkable trip. The record of that trip may be found in his book 'Following the Old Trail.' The written record, that is. The pictorial record

—which I think I may venture to call the most uniquely interesting and fascinating thing of its sort now in existence—he entrusted to me, and it forms the basis of this collection of photographs, original drawings, and paintings.”

Nick could not get away. He was obliged once more to seat himself on the sofa, this time beside a bearded old gentleman, and to look and listen for an interminable time. He had to watch desperately for a moment to escape, and he had to go without a word to Rosaleen, except a formal “good-evening.” The uncle accompanied him to the front door, even to the top of the stairs, to invite him cordially to come again.

IV

OUTSIDE in the street he stopped to light a cigarette. And to sigh with relief. What an evening!

And still was happy, very happy, because Rosaleen was so respectable.

CHAPTER SIX

I

FROM the midst of entrancing dreams Rosaleen was awakened the next morning by a most unwelcome voice, and she opened her eyes to find Miss Amy sitting on the edge of her bed. She had been asleep when Miss Amy came in the night before, but she had never expected, never even hoped that she would be able to avoid a dreadful cross-examination. And here it was beginning.

“Mr. Morton tells me you had a young man in here last evening,” she was saying. “I should like you to explain it. Who was he?”

Rosaleen, terribly at a disadvantage, thus lying flat in bed, dishevelled and surprised, answered that he was a friend of Miss Waters.

“Why did he come here?”

“I—he said he wanted to call . . .”

“And you gave him this permission without consulting me?”

“I didn’t think you’d mind——”

“I *do* mind, Rosaleen. I mind very much. It was something you had no right to do.”

"I won't again," said Rosaleen.

"I should hope not. Who was he?"

"A friend of Miss Waters."

"What was his name?"

"Mr. Landry."

"What is he? What does he do? Where does he live?"

"I don't know."

Miss Amy got up.

"I shall telephone to Miss Waters and ask her."

"No!" said Rosaleen. "Don't! Please! . . . I'll never let him come again . . ."

"That makes no difference. It's my duty to know what sort of young men you're asking into this house. I shall certainly ask Miss Waters for a little further information."

"She won't know!" cried Rosaleen. "He—she doesn't know him very well. . . . He just happened to drop in at her studio one day. . . ."

"Why?"

"To see about a picture. . . ."

"Is he an artist?"

"I—don't think so."

"How often have you seen him?"

"Oh! . . . I don't know—exactly. . . ."

She sat up suddenly.

"Won't it satisfy you if I never have him here again?" she cried. "Or anybody else, ever?"

"No. I want you to have him here again. I want to see him."

Rosaleen looked at that impassive wolfish face, at those black eyes scrutinizing her behind their eyeglasses, and a profound distrust came over her. In that instant, for the first time, she questioned the motives of her benefactress; she doubted her goodness. Instead of duty in her glance, she saw malice. Never, never, if she could possibly help it, should Miss Amy and Nick Landry come face to face.

She relapsed into what Miss Amy called a "sullen silence," but which was in reality only a desperate silence. There sat that woman on her bed, formulating God knows what plans against her. She was so helpless! She lay back on her pillow, as if she were bound hand and foot, her soft hair spread about her, her face stony with despair, the very picture of a maiden victim.

"I am sorry you forgot yourself to such an extent," observed Miss Amy, and rose. "Get up now and dress; it's late."

Rosaleen sprang out of bed.

"What *can* I possibly tell him?" she cried to herself. "He'll want to come again, of course. . . . What can I tell him?"

She looked for him at Miss Waters' studio the next afternoon, looked for him with vehement longing. She was in such terror that he would go to the flat again and be met there by Miss Amy. If she had known where he lived, she would have written to him, to entreat him not to do so. But that course blocked, she could do nothing but hope and hope that he would instead come to the studio, where she could tell him. . . . She didn't care *what* she told him, what monstrous thing she invented, if only she kept him away.

He didn't come. She flagrantly neglected her work. Leaning back against the wall, arms clasped behind her head, she gossiped with Miss Waters. And Miss Waters, stifling a feeling of guilt at thus not earning her money, gave herself without restraint to this illicit, this joyful chatter. For Rosaleen was joyful, in spite of her great anxiety, her dread of losing her Nicholas. Even if she lost him now, she would have the happiness of knowing that one man at least had looked upon her with tenderness and delight.

Miss Waters talked about Brussels and Paris, of course, and to-day, with new boldness, began to speak of Love. Hitherto she had never mentioned this topic, but now that Rosaleen had a young man, she felt she might consider her altogether mature,

initiated, so to speak. So she told a long and thrilling story of an artist—a very poor young artist—who had fallen in love with a wealthy young girl of good family. And how cruel she was to him. It was difficult to understand why they had so eagerly desired these meetings which Miss Waters feelingly described, for apparently she had come to the rendezvous only to be cruel, and he only to weep and to suffer. By and by she had married a distinguished man, and the young artist began, with true French propriety, to die of consumption. Then the lady, not to be outdone, began to suffer too; the anguish of remorse. She compromised her name by visiting his studio as he lay dying, and her life was ruined. It was awfully long, but to Miss Waters intensely interesting, because she had actually seen the people with her own eyes.

A little earlier than usual Rosaleen went home, to find Miss Amy there, reading, and coldly suspicious.

“She thinks I’ve met him,” she thought. “Don’t I wish I had!”

A joyful sense of her own freedom came over her; no one could really stop her, no one could restrain her. She *would* see him! All the suspicious, middle-aged spinsters on earth couldn’t stop her! She was more subtle, more daring, she was stronger than Miss Amy!

And yet she passed the evening in dread—terrified that she might hear the door bell ring, and that it might be Nick.

II

It was the custom in their household for Mr. Humbert when he went down stairs every morning, to look in the mail box, and if there were anything of interest there, to ring the bell three times, as a signal for Rosaleen to come running down. If there were nothing but cards from laundries and carpet cleaners, and so on, he didn't ring.

But on the next morning, to the astonishment of Rosaleen, he came back, up the four flights of stairs again, with the mail in his hand. And without a word, gave it to his sister. She showed no surprise; it was evidently prearranged between them.

Rosaleen stood by, waiting. But Mr. Humbert turned away and the door was closed after him. And Miss Amy walked off to her own room with the letters.

Rosaleen, left alone in the dark passage, clenched her hands. She knew, she was certain that one of those letters was for her. But dared not ask. She thought that she might be able to steal it; she waited for a chance to enter Miss Amy's room, and there in the waste paper basket she saw the torn fragments

of an envelope. With her meek air she went about her work; Miss Amy really fancied that she suspected nothing. But the moment Miss Amy had gone out to market, she ran into the room and emptied the waste paper basket on to the floor, and, on her hands and knees, began to piece the envelope together. It was! Miss Rosaleen Humbert! But there was not a trace of the letter which must have been in it.

A dreadful resentment possessed her. She *hated* Miss Amy. As she sat sewing through the interminable evening, her anger almost stifled her. This woman had cheated and defrauded her. She had stolen her very life! And she was absolutely at her mercy, absolutely helpless. She couldn't even explain to Nick. He would think of course that she had got his letter; he would see that she didn't answer it. Perhaps he had suggested another meeting, perhaps he would go to wait for her somewhere, wait and wait, in vain. . . .

That thought made her desperate. She thought for a moment of boldly confronting Miss Amy, but she very soon relinquished the idea. It couldn't do any good, and it might do harm. No! She would have to try some other way.

The lamplight shone on her smooth head, bent over her work, her profile turned to Miss Amy had

the guileless sweetness and carelessness of a child. . . . And Miss Amy was consumed with anger—an anger a hundred times fiercer than Rosaleen's. She pretended to be reading, but the hands that held the magazine trembled, and she never turned a page. Rage, scorn, a hatred which she could not comprehend, filled her at the sight of this false maiden, this treacherous creature who dared stretch out her hand after the thing which life had withheld from the older woman. And suddenly, with shocking coldness, she burst forth:

“Did you tell that man *I* was your *cousin*? ”

Rosaleen looked up, pale with fright. She waited a moment.

“I said—I only said—a sort of cousin. . . .”

“You let him think that you—were something that you are *not*? ”

She was silent.

“When he came here, did he know your position in this household? ”

“Not exactly. . . .”

Miss Amy smiled.

“I thought not. Now, Rosaleen, I want you to listen to me. I knew this would happen. I warned poor dear Miss Julie of it. I *told* her that when you were grown, these—complications were sure to occur. I could see that you were going to be that sort

of a girl, frivolous and silly—misled by flattery.” She had to stop for a moment, to choke down the words on the tip of her tongue, terms of contempt for Rosaleen which common sense told her had not yet been deserved. Then she went on:

“I shan’t try to prevent you from seeing—young men. It’s none of my business. But I won’t have any deceit about it. Anyone who’s interested in you has a right to know who you are and what you are.”

With a mighty effort Rosaleen concealed every trace of emotion. She looked up with an impatient sigh.

“But, Miss Amy, I can’t be telling all about myself to everyone I meet. I don’t expect to see him—that man—again. I just didn’t bother.”

“That’s not true!” said Miss Amy. “I may as well tell you that a letter came from him this morning, in which he mentioned that you ‘unfortunately had no chance to arrange another meeting.’ Now I want you to tell me all about this affair.”

“Nothing to tell!” said Rosaleen, airily. “I met him, and he asked if he could come to see me, and I said yes. I’m sorry I did it. I never will again.”

Miss Amy took up the magazine again. Intolerable to sit in the room with this girl! She wished she had the courage to send her to the kitchen where she belonged.

The clock struck nine and Rosaleen got up.

"I think I'll go to bed," she said. "Good-night, Miss Amy!"

Miss Amy answered without looking up.

But when Rosaleen had got into bed and turned out the light, she entered her room without knocking, with that calm authority that at once intimidated and enraged the young girl. And sat down heavily on the cot, making it creak.

"Rosaleen," she said. "As long as you can't be trusted to act honourably of your own accord, I shall have to do so for you. I am going to write to the young man and tell him your history."

Rosaleen gave a little shriek.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "Oh no! You *couldn't* be so cruel and horrible!"

Miss Amy was a little alarmed at the emotion she had aroused. She hesitated.

"Then will you tell him yourself?"

"Yes!" Rosaleen said. "Yes! I will!"

Miss Amy sat there, a dim bulk in the darkness.

"I shall write to him," she said slowly, "and ask him to come here, and you can tell him. Tell him what you should have told him in the beginning."

The next morning when Rosaleen was dressed and ready to go out, Miss Amy handed her a letter.

“You may see it, if you like,” she said.

But what Rosaleen looked at was the address; one glance stamped it on her mind.

III

WHEN Landry came down to breakfast the next morning there were two letters lying by his plate. He concealed his great anxiety to open them; he sat down and asked his aunt how she had passed the night. She made a point of coming down to take breakfast with him, although it was rather hard for her to be about so early. But she adored the boy, and his affectionate politeness more than compensated her.

She said thank you, she had slept very well.

“Do you mind?” said Nicholas, picking up his letters.

“Of cou’se not!” she answered, and he opened the first.

Miss Amy Humbert would be pleased to see him on Wednesday evening between eight and nine. The old fashioned formality made him smile, but it pleased him, it pleased him very much. It was one step nearer to his Rosaleen. Then he opened the other.

His aunt noticed that he had stopped eating. He

sat staring at his plate, lost in thought, frowning. Then he looked up stealthily at her, and she endured his critical regard with calmness. And he evidently decided at last that she was to be trusted, for he got up and brought his two letters to her.

She read the invitation with a smile; then she looked at the other, scratched, scrawled on a piece of cheap paper in a stamped envelope.

“Dear Mr. Landry:

“Please don’t come on Wednesday. Please don’t *ever* come. If you will come to Miss Waters’ studio this afternoon I will explain. But please do not write, because I do not get the letters.”

And it was signed simply “R.”

“And I can’t go to Miss Waters’!” he cried. “I can’t possibly ask for an afternoon off the very first week of this new job!”

“Who is ‘R’?” asked his aunt, gently.

“Rosaleen. What do you make of this, Aunt Emmie?”

“My dearest boy, Ah don’t know anything about it at all, remember! Can’t you tell me something about her?”

“I don’t know much about her. But—I’m interested in her. I—I like her.”

“But what sort of people are they?”

"Oh, fairly decent! Respectable, quiet sort of people, as far as I can see. She's an orphan—lives with her uncle and cousin. She's studying art."

All this sounded reassuring to his aunt. The first shock was over, and she began to feel pity for his trouble. He was so agitated, walking up and down the room, with his sulky, boyish scowl.

"Good Lord! What a situation!" he cried. "She asks me not to come and not to write—and they have no telephone. And she asks me to meet her, so that she can explain, and I'm not able to go. And she may be in trouble of some sort. I think it's very likely."

"Shall Ah go there for you this afternoon, and explain?"

"No!" said Nick. But he stopped short, and braced himself for an argument. "But I'll tell you what you *can* do, Aunt Emmy!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

I

ROSALEEN came home from Miss Waters' that afternoon terribly dispirited. He hadn't come!

The afternoons were growing very short now. The flat was altogether dark when she let herself in, and she went from room to room, to light the gas jets and turn them very low. First in the long hall, then in Mr. Humbert's room, with its flat top desk covered with papers and its severe orderliness, then in Miss Amy's room, where, in the mirror over the bureau, she caught a glimpse of herself, still in her hat and jacket, looking oddly blurred and misty in the dim light. Somehow that image frightened her; she hurried into the dining room, her own little cell, and at last, with relief, into the kitchen. Never had the rambling old place seemed so large and so gloomy, or herself so desolate.

She put on her big apron and set to work preparing the supper, a shocking meal of fried steak, fried potatoes, coffee, a tin of tomatoes left unaltered in their watery insipidity, and a flabby little lemon pie

from the baker's. She was nervous; she fancied she heard sounds from all those silent dimly lighted rooms behind her. She started when a paper bag on the table rattled stiffly all by itself. She was, for once, glad to hear the sound of a key in the lock and Miss Amy's heavy tread coming down the hall.

She had been to the library; she was carrying four big volumes which she flung down on the dining room couch. Then she looked into the kitchen.

"Mmmm! The coffee smells good!" she said, affably, and went off to her own room. She never offered any assistance, even to setting the table. She considered all that to be Rosaleen's affair. Nor did she notice that the child looked tired and pale and dejected.

Nor did she notice that Rosaleen ate almost nothing. They had, all three of them, very small appetites, which, when added to their highly unappetizing meals, made life very economical. Moreover, she considered it meritorious to eat very little, and not to enjoy what you did eat.

They finished. Mr. Humbert rose, said, very pleasantly, "Ah . . . !" and went off to his writing. Miss Amy sat down on the couch to look over her library books, and Rosaleen, putting on her apron again, began carrying out the dishes. She was slow that evening; she didn't want to finish.

"If I only had a place where I could go and sit by myself!" she thought, not for the first time. "I don't want to go and sit there with *her*! And if I go in my own room, she'll be after me, to see what's the matter."

She sat down in the kitchen and began to polish a copper tea kettle which was never used.

Suddenly the door bell rang. She jumped up, pressed the button which opened the down stairs door, and hurried along the passage. But Miss Amy was before her, and stood squarely in the doorway.

In a dream, a nightmare, Rosaleen heard Nick's voice:

"Miss Humbert?" he asked, politely.

"I am Miss Humbert!"

"May we see Miss Rosaleen Humbert?"

"There's no such person," said Miss Amy.

There was a pause. Then another voice, a feminine one, soft, agreeable, but unmistakably rebuking, said,

"Ah am Mrs. Allanby, Mr. Landry's aunt."

"Ah!" said Miss Amy.

"Ma nephew was afraid that perhaps you might not have liked his calling on your cousin——"

"Rosaleen is not my cousin," said Miss Amy, contemptuously.

Mrs. Allanby was just beginning to speak, when

Nick broke in. He couldn't keep his temper any longer. The spectacle of his beloved and dignified aunt standing outside the door, and being spoken to so outrageously by this woman both shocked and infuriated him.

"Will you kindly ask Miss Rosaleen to step here for a minute?" he said. "We won't trouble you long!"

His air of disgust, of superiority, stung the unhappy woman to still worse behaviour. She *could* not stop; she took a sort of monstrous delight in going on, in defying the warnings of her conscience and her pride.

"Evidently you don't understand," she said. "You seem to think the girl is a relative. She isn't. My sister found her posing for a class of art students, and she felt sorry for her and brought her home. My sister was very good to her, and for her sake I've gone on feeding and clothing her. She does a little light work round the place, to pay for her keep. . . ."

Suddenly all her annoyance, her years of irritation with Rosaleen, her ill-temper kept under such iron control, all the suffering she had endured from this false calm, this false pleasantness, this inhuman repression of her natural self, burst forth.

"I'm sick and *tired* of it!" she cried. "Such non-

sense! The girl, with her airs and graces. . . . Just a common, low Irish girl. . . . She's had advantages I never had in my young days. . . . I'm sick and tired of it! It's the final straw, for her to be asking company here. . . . I won't have it! It's *my* home, after all, and there's no place in it where *she* can entertain!"

They were all silent, aghast at her violence, her coarse cruelty. Her voice was loud, so loud as to arouse Mr. Humbert from his work. He thrust his venerable head out of his door, but instantly popped it in again. Miss Amy, horrified at herself, trembling with rage, ready to burst into tears, cried out, suddenly——

"You can just take them into the kitchen!"

And stood aside, pointing down the passage.

"Come along, Aunt Emmie!" said Nick. "Come away before I——"

But she had entered, and was going along the passage. Rosaleen went before her into the kitchen, drew forward the one chair, and dragged another in from the dining room. Mrs. Allanby, gracious and kind, sat down, and smiled at Rosaleen.

"Come and sit down beside me!" she said.

Rosaleen shook her head. Mrs. Allanby spoke again, she thought she even heard Nick's voice, but she couldn't understand them. They sounded very,

very faint. She was dizzy, sick, her ears were ringing. She stood leaning against the tubs, still in her gingham apron, staring at them——

At that charming and beautifully dressed woman, at the scowling young man standing behind her, proud as Lucifer, in the *kitchen*. . . .

She flung her arm across her eyes.

“Go away!” she cried. “Go away!”

II

SHE didn’t really know when they had gone. She stood without moving, without hearing or seeing for a long time. Then suddenly the turmoil within her died down and she felt perfectly calm.

She went into her own room and began packing her clothes into a little wicker suitcase, quite carefully and neatly. She hadn’t even troubled to close the door, and inevitably Miss Amy came in.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“I’m going away,” said Rosaleen.

“What nonsense! At this time of night! I won’t allow it!”

“You can’t stop me,” said Rosaleen.

Miss Amy was frightened, unspeakably dismayed at what she had done.

“Don’t be silly!” she said. “Let bygones be by-

gones. I—I'm sorry, Rosaleen. Let's forget all about it. Get to bed now, like a good girl!"

Rosaleen shook her head.

"No!" she said, "I've got to go."

"You wicked girl! Think of all we've done for you!" said Miss Amy, in despair.

"I don't care," said Rosaleen.

"I won't let you take that suitcase, then. It's mine."

Instantly Rosaleen began taking her things out of it.

"I'll wrap them in a newspaper," she said.

Miss Amy stood there threatening, entreating, arguing, but Rosaleen was like a stone. She did wrap her things in a newspaper; then she put on her hat and coat and went out into the passage. Miss Amy stood with her back against the front door.

"I won't let you!" she cried. "Where would you go—all alone—at this time of night!"

A horrible fear had risen in her mind. If Rosaleen "went wrong," *she* would be responsible. She didn't much care what else happened to her, as long as *that* was avoided. But she couldn't have *that* on her conscience.

"Morton!" she cried, desperately. "Morton! Come out and speak to this wicked, headstrong girl!"

No earthly power could have brought the author into this. He didn't even answer. He got up from his desk and slipped across the room, and *very* quietly locked the door.

"I won't let you out!" cried Miss Amy.

"I'll stand here till you do!" said Rosaleen firmly.

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A long time went by. Miss Amy had grown weary beyond endurance. And there stood Rosaleen, leaning against the wall, with her newspaper package under her arm, pallid, solemn, unconquerable.

Suddenly Miss Amy began to cry.

"Very well, you miserable, heartless girl!" she sobbed. "Go, then, if you *will*!"

Rosaleen went by her, out of the door, and down the stairs. And never again did Miss Amy set eyes on her in this world.

BOOK TWO: AMONG THE ARTISTS

CHAPTER ONE

I

SHE felt, really and actually, like a new person, and she looked like one, too. She was walking down Sixth Avenue, after an interview with the fashion editor of a big magazine who had said that neither now nor at any possible future time would he use any of her work. It was a sharp November day, and she was still wearing a thin suit, in the pocket of which lay a fifty-cent piece, borrowed from Miss Waters, all the money she had in the world. And still she was happy, profoundly happy. She walked briskly, staring candidly at whatever interested her, no longer trying to be ladylike, and feeling herself for the first time in her life an independent personality, not obliged to please anyone. And she was going home to a place where she was welcome, where she was encouraged and admired—in short, to Miss Waters' flat.

Miss Waters had taken her in on that terrible

evening without asking for a word of explanation. She had simply kissed her and suggested going to bed, and when Rosaleen was lying beside her in the dark, both of them fiercely wide awake, she said not a word, never put a question. The next morning she had got up early and made coffee and toast and brought it to Rosaleen as she lay in bed. At last she had heard the story and she was horrified. She quite agreed that Rosaleen had done well to leave Miss Amy, but being old and more cruelly schooled in the world's ways, she had seen how much the girl was losing. A home, a roof over one's head, and food and clothing—she knew the cost of these in money and in effort. She had gone, on her own initiative, to see Miss Amy, to see if she could not rescue something for her lamb. She never mentioned that interview to Rosaleen, and she had tried to forget it as soon as possible. It was a humiliating and complete failure; the European Art Teacher had had very much the worst of it.

She had then devoted herself to heartening this dejected and sorrowful young creature, and with amazing results. Rosaleen was now convinced that the world lay before her, to be conquered by her brush. Freedom from criticism and hostility transformed her. Miss Waters suggested various places where she might look for "art work," and she went

to them without timidity, was never discouraged by refusals. She knew that Miss Waters was glad to have her there as long as she wished to stay, and whatever expense she caused she expected to repay before long. Cheerful and pleasant days, these were. When she wasn't out hunting jobs, she was with Miss Waters, drawing or helping her in her very easy-going and muddled housekeeping. In the evening they had dinner at little Italian table d'hôtes, they went to "movies," or they worked at home together. Rosaleen made dress designs to show as samples of her ability, things so spirited and attractive that Miss Waters was surprised.

"I never knew you were so gifted, my dear," she said. "I knew—I *always* knew you had talent, but I didn't know you were so *practical*."

There was something else that surprised Miss Waters. She couldn't comprehend how Rosaleen could be so cheerful, after what had happened. But the part of Rosaleen's brain which was concerned with Nick Landry was shut, was sealed. She was dimly aware that some day she would have to open that door, and examine and comprehend what lay behind it. She knew that Grief was shut in there, and frightful Disappointment. Knew too that through that locked compartment lay the way to

her heaven. But she turned aside her head. She went another road.

Cheerful and lively, her cheeks rosy with the winter air, she hurried through the twilit street, up the steps of Miss Waters' old-fashioned house, and rang the bell. She waited a long time for an answer: she rang again, and still must wait. The flat was on the first floor; standing on the stoop she tried to peer in at the front window, but, unaccountably, the shade was pulled down. She rang once more, almost without hope, sure that Miss Waters must have gone out for a few moments; but this time the door clicked violently, and she entered. Miss Waters was standing at her own front door; she was dressed in a black lace tea gown, with a black jet butterfly in her fluffy white hair; she looked strangely elegant and exalted. And in a voice trembling with excitement, she seized Rosaleen's hands.

"Many happy returns of the day!" she cried.

"Oh! It was sweet of you to remember it was my birthday!" said Rosaleen, touched almost to tears by the festive dress.

Miss Waters gently pulled her inside the door.

"Now!" she said.

And if she hadn't a surprise party for Rosaleen!

The shades were all down, the curtains drawn, and candles lighted in the dusty, untidy little sit-

ting room, and it had somehow a mysterious and fascinating atmosphere. It seemed quite crowded with people too, and when she entered they all came forward. There was only one whom she knew at all; Miss Mell, a stout girl in spectacles, who had been Miss Waters' first pupil, years ago. She came with commendable regularity to visit her old teacher every two or three weeks, and Rosaleen had more than once seen her in the studio, sitting quite still and listening to Miss Waters' talking, a kindly and amused smile on her face. Then there was a desperately lively girl who ran a tea room, and two agreeable young English women, and a disagreeable, sneering old gentleman with a goatee, whose name she never learned, nor whose business there. And an arrogant, handsome girl with a violin, who played something for them.

Assisted by Miss Mell, Miss Waters served them all with cake and wine and sandwiches, and then brought forth cigarettes, for the conversation which she expected to enjoy.

“They’re all people who *do* things!” she whispered to Rosaleen.

They all conscientiously endeavoured to behave like a party of artists, to smoke and to talk about “interesting” things. And they created a very fair illusion. At any rate, it made Miss Waters happy.

Miss Mell was very friendly, so friendly that Rosaleen couldn't help thinking Miss Waters must have told her her history.

"We're just setting up as artists," she said, sitting down beside Rosaleen. (They were the only ones not smoking.) "We've taken a studio on the south side of the Square, Bainbridge and I. We're moving in to-morrow. And we want someone else to go in with us, to share a third of the expense. It'll amount to about twenty dollars a month, a third of the rent, and the gas and telephone, and so on. And I wondered if you'd like to come in with us?"

"I should!" said Rosaleen. "But I couldn't. I couldn't afford it. I haven't got on my feet yet."

"We intend to work, you know. Hard! And I might be able to help you. Fashions, isn't it? I know a lot of the people—editors and so on. I wish you would!"

"But—I haven't a cent!" said Rosaleen. "Nothing at all. If I can find a job——"

"In an office? It's a pity to do that, if your work's any good. You have no time left for anything else, and you can't get ahead. If you work hard, and once get a decent start, you can do far better as a free lance."

"I know it!" said Rosaleen. "But you've got to

be able to live while you're *getting* a start, and I——”

But the handsome and arrogant young woman had begun to play her violin again, and everyone became silent. It was music which had little to say to Rosaleen; it was austere brain music; but she was enchanted to watch the musician, the exquisite movement of her right arm and wrist, the delicate interplay of the fingers of her left hand, the faint, fleeting shadows that crossed her proud, fine face. She was, Rosaleen thought, very like a picture Miss Amy had of Marie Antoinette riding in the tumbrill.

The piece was ended, and they all applauded.

“That’s Bainbridge,” Miss Mell explained. “My pal, the one who has the studio with me. She’s absolutely a genius.”

Rosaleen regarded her with undisguised admiration.

“I wish I could come with you!” she said, regretfully.

II

Miss MELL and Miss Bainbridge were in that state of exhaustion in which any sort of rest or pause is fatal. They had agreed to go on working until they were really “settled,” with everything unpacked

and neat. Enthusiasm had entirely gone now; they were working doggedly, and, secretly, without much hope of ever being done. Miss Bainbridge was on her knees before a packing case filled with papers, drawings, music, and that mass of letters, bills, and receipts one feels obliged to keep. Miss Mell was feebly cleaning out the hearth, which was quite full of the debris of the former tenants.

There was a knock at the door, and they both called out, "Come in!" but without interest.

It was Miss Waters and Rosaleen. Miss Waters beckoned mysteriously to Miss Mell, and they vanished into the back room.

"Have you got your third person for the studio yet?" Miss Waters enquired, anxiously.

Miss Mell shook her head.

"Then you can have Rosaleen!" cried Miss Waters, with triumph. "I'm so glad, for your sake, and for her sake. It's an *ideal* arrangement!"

And, seeing that Miss Mell looked only polite and not enthusiastic, she went on:

"You will just love that child! She has the disposition of an angel. Never a cross or disagreeable word. And after all she's been through!"

"Yes," said Miss Mell. "She seems very nice. We'll be glad to have her."

"You see," Miss Waters went on, in a whisper.

“Yesterday, not an hour after you’d left the house, a letter came for her from that beastly woman I told you about—that Amy Humbert. And in it, my dear, was a cheque for *five hundred* dollars. It seems that the *nice* sister had told her on her death-bed to give that to Rosaleen when she was twenty-one. She wrote—this Amy woman, I mean—that she wasn’t legally obliged to give it to Rosaleen, but that she felt it was a moral obligation, and that she always tried to do what was right, and more like that. *You* know the sort of person, Dodo! Well! . . . The poor child was wild with joy. . . . And I advised her to come with you, if it could be done. Five hundred dollars will keep her for a long time, if she’s careful, and she ought to be earning a good living long before it’s gone. Don’t you think so?”

“Yes, I should think so,” said Miss Mell, thoughtfully.

“Then I’ll tell her!” said Miss Waters, and hastened into the big room, where Rosaleen stood, looking sheepishly about her. Miss Bainbridge had discouraged her attempts at conversation with no great gentleness and the chairs were all filled with things, so that she couldn’t even sit down.

“It’s all right!” cried Miss Waters. “I *am* so glad!”

"Look round and see how you like it," said Miss Mell, and they did.

The place seemed to them the very ideal of a studio. It was a dark old room on the south side of the Square, thoroughly dirty and almost past cleaning. There were plenty of mice and other more intolerable vermin, and a musty smell that no airing could banish. But, to compensate, more than to compensate, was the View, the Outlook, the sight of scrawny little Washington Square Park and a glimpse up Fifth Avenue through the Arch. Every visitor they ever had later on admired this view.

It had just the right sort of furnishings, too, left intact by the two former girl artists who were subletting it. Big wicker chairs and little feeble tables, a rug, small, dingy and expensive, a screen, a battered and stained drawing table, candles with "quaint" shades striped purple and yellow. And pieces of hammered brass which should have gleamed from corners but which did not gleam because they were too dirty and the corners were so very dark that nothing within them was visible. The place had altogether an aimless air, a look of being one part work room and three parts play room; it was frivolous in a solemn, pretentious sort of way, neither pretty nor convenient.

But to Rosaleen an enchanted spot, something

which seemed to her more like home, dearer to her than any other place in the world. She loved it!

"I'd like to help," she said. "What shall I do first?"

"The back room," said Enid. "Otherwise we'll never get to bed to-night."

Rosaleen lifted the curtain and went into the back room where they were all to sleep and to do their cooking. A forlorn place, overrun with roaches, and containing two cots, a filthy gas stove, an old sink red with rust, and a dreadful mouldy little thing that had once been an ice-box. There was no window, no light except the gas high overhead. It was depressing, hideous, highly unwholesome, with an air of abandoned domesticity terribly distressing to Rosaleen. She couldn't endure the thought of food being prepared and cooked in that dark and dirty place. But the others didn't care at all.

They had got themselves some sort of lunch there before Rosaleen's arrival; the greasy plates still stood by the sink.

"I'll make you some tea," she said, pitying their grimy and back-breaking labour.

She scrubbed out a rusty little kettle and set it on to boil; then she began to wash the dishes and to clean the cluttered, dusty shelf and to set out on it

the provisions lying about in bags and boxes. She opened the little ice-box, devoid of ice and smelling most vilely, and saw in there a loaf of bread and an opened tin of milk.

"I wouldn't *use* that ice-box if I were you!" she called out, anxiously. "It doesn't seem—nice."

"All right!" Miss Mell answered, soothingly.

She made tea and brought it in on the lid of a box for a tray. But it was very poor, cheap tea and it smelt like straw.

"I don't think it's a very good brand," said Rosaleen. "Why don't you try Noxey's?"

Miss Bainbridge looked up from her third cup.

"Look here!" she said. "My idea is that you should do all that sort of thing. We can't and won't. Mell, give her the money and let her buy everything. . . . And you'll see we always have everything we need, won't you? Things for breakfast, and so on? Dinner I suppose we'll take outside. I will, anyway. You'd better go out now, I think. First look and see what we need, coffee, rolls, all the proper things. And wood: it would be nice to start a fire here this evening. We didn't know where to get any."

Rosaleen went, but she was not too well pleased with the tone of her new companion. And still less did she like her contemptuous indifference to Miss

Waters, when she popped in later on to see if she could help. She was by nature resigned and patient, and her training had accentuated this; on her own behalf she would have endured a great deal from Miss Bainbridge. But she had a loyalty for her friends that was fanatical. Her heart had ached for her poor old friend, with her well-meaning sprightliness quashed. When she had gone, when she had called a quavering and gay "Au revoir!" from the foot of the stairs, Rosaleen had turned and resolutely faced the arrogant Miss Bainbridge.

"I——" she began. "I'll ask you please—not to talk like that to Miss Waters."

Her mouth was set grimly; she looked at that moment rather like her mother.

"Why?" asked Miss Bainbridge, coolly.

"She's—she's old, for one thing."

"Old enough to die. No, Miss-What's-Your-Name, I can't be sentimental about your rather awful old friend. And we don't want her bothering us here. The sooner she finds it out, the better. If you won't give her a hint, I will."

"No," said Rosaleen, "I won't. . . . And I won't let you."

"What!" cried Miss Bainbridge. "You won't let me? Is that what you said? How do you propose to stop me?"

“Well,” said Rosaleen. “I—I suppose I *can’t* stop you. But I can go away and not hear you. And I will.”

“Good-bye!” said Miss Bainbridge.

Miss Mell intervened.

“See here, Enid, my child, this won’t do! You mustn’t offend Rosaleen. Don’t be too much of a genius!”

“There’s no reason for her to be offended. She’s not personally responsible for Miss Waters. I’ve simply put my foot down about the old imbecile——”

“But the studio belongs to all three of us,” said Miss Mell. “And Rosaleen and I want Miss Waters. It’s two against one.”

Miss Bainbridge had got up and was looking at them with an ugly, narrowed glance. But Miss Mell continued her unpacking, and Rosaleen, instead of quailing, met her look quite calmly. She couldn’t do much with *them*. . . .

She made a real effort to control that unbridled temper, to subdue that fierce pride that could endure no slightest contradiction. She saw, as she could always see, where her own best interest lay; that if she wished to get on with these comrades, she must make concessions.

“Very well,” she said. “Have her, if you want.”

Rosaleen was not to be outdone in magnanimity. "I don't want you to be bothered," she said. "I'll try to keep her from interrupting your work the least bit. It's only—if you please won't be rude to her. . . . Because she's really very nice."

"But can't you *see*!" cried Miss Bainbridge, with a sort of despair. "I'm not like you. If I'm surrounded by mushy, stupid, jabbering people, it—harms me! If I were kind to people like that, I'd ruin myself. You hear about people being killed with kindness. Well, a great many more people are killed—or destroyed—by *being* kind. No one who amounts to anything can be so damn *kind*. It's often necessary to be cruel; and it's *always* necessary to be indifferent. My job is to paint—to the very best of my ability. It doesn't matter how Miss Waters feels. The world isn't going to be any better or any worse for *her* feelings."

Rosaleen reflected for some time. Then she spoke, thoughtfully and firmly:

"I guess Art isn't as important as all that!" she said.

CHAPTER TWO

I

THE next afternoon they were all settled peacefully at work. They had agreed to give up the idea of getting all in order first; they had decided that they would do a little every day.

Miss Mell was at work on an oil painting representing a white tiled bathroom in which sat a heavenly fair young mother undressing a baby on her lap, while near her were playing two misty, wistful little children in bathgowns. In the air, over their heads, was a huge tin of talcum powder, and beneath the picture were the words—"THAT COM'FY, SILKY, CUDDLY FEELING WHICH ONLY FEATHERBLO POW-
DER CAN GIVE."

It was an order; she had enough commissions ahead to keep her busy for months. She made it her business to suit her clients and their public; if she had any tastes of her own, she set them aside. She had good sense and shrewdness and no illusions of her own greatness. She wished to earn a living by drawing, because she was fond of it and did it

fairly well. She never used the word "Art," never expressed an aesthetic opinion. The advertising agency for which she did most of her work considered her in all things perfect and especially created to fill their wants.

Miss Bainbridge was stippling the background of a little pen and ink sketch—a bizarre thing which she was going to try on a brand new art magazine. It was a woman, nude except for an immense black cloak sprinkled with white stars which floated from her shoulders. She stood alone on an immense stage with a background of black dots; and before and below her was a swimming sea of eyes. She called it "Failure."

Rosaleen too was working, but neither contentedly nor successfully. The more she saw of the others, the less she thought of herself. They worked with such industry, hour after hour. They didn't seem to have the slightest trace of her fatal desire for distraction. After she had been drawing for an hour or so, she always became intolerably restless, so that even washing dishes was a relief. . . . By the side of Enid Bainbridge she felt as some poor little clergyman, struggling incessantly to feed and clothe his family, sick with cares and worries of this world, might feel by the side of Saint Paul. Enid worshipped her god with a single heart. Not for

money, not for praise, not for any conceivable reward, would she do anything but her best. Even her ruthlessness, her selfishness, had in them something sublime. She was the priestess, sacrificing all things on her altar. Rosaleen, while disagreeing with her as to the relative importance of art in life, nevertheless venerated her devotion.

She wanted very much to ask their opinion of the design she had just made, but she didn't venture to interrupt them. She regarded them covertly; Miss Mell in her gingham apron, with her calm, be-spectacled face cheerfully intent on her painting; Enid Bainbridge bending over her drawing with desperate intensity. . . . She had beautiful hair, Rosaleen observed, and she knew how to dress it.

She got up and crossed the room, very quietly, so as not to shake the floor, and sat down before the hearth to bait a mouse-trap. The place was overrun with mice; they had disturbed her horribly the night before.

And suddenly the industrious silence was broken by a tremendous knock at the door.

“Come in!” called Miss Mell, in her cheerful, encouraging voice.

The door opened, so widely that it slammed against the wall, and in walked an enormously fat man, with a swarthy face, an upturned mustache

and a monocle dangling by a broad black ribbon. He was dressed with extreme care, with well-creased trousers, a fastidious necktie, and fawn-coloured spats; but the greater part of him was enveloped in a flowing grey linen smock.

They all stared at him, astonished; he was so extraordinary. He stared at them.

“I heard,” he said, “that there were three little female artists up here, and I came in to look them over, to see if they were pretty and interesting, or not. I live downstairs, my children, and my name is Lawrence Iverson.”

“I’ve seen some of your work,” said Enid, carelessly. “In the Kremoth Galleries. Rather good.”

He looked critically at Enid, but she met his glance with one quite as cool and appraising.

“Who are *you*?” he asked. “To call my work ‘rather good’?”

“No one much, *just yet*,” she answered.

He crossed the room and fixing his monocle, examined her work.

“Not even ‘rather good,’ ” he said. “Clever—cheaply clever. Trick stuff—all in one dimension. Worthless.”

“No, it isn’t,” she contradicted. “It’s what I mean it to be, anyway. It expresses what I want it to. Now, a thing like that ‘Idols’ you did is what I

call a failure. You had something you wanted to express, and you didn't. It didn't mean anything."

"My God! Young woman, I never mean anything. . . . But you're the perfect school marm 'doing art.' You're concerned with ideas, because you have a brain, a little tiny one, but no soul. You don't know what beauty is. What, you girl, does a tree *mean*? What does a lovely arm *mean*? I give my pictures names because people won't buy them without names. But the names are all damn nonsense, just to make the fools talk. For instance, I will conceive a group, of perfect, heart-breaking harmony, three figures in attitudes which form a complete and exquisite design. . . . You see that sort of thing once in a while, without forethought. I saw, the other day, a woman bending down from the top of a flight of steps to take a bag a grocer's boy was reaching up to her. They made the most beautiful combination of curves God ever allowed. . . . *You're* not bad looking"

Enid paid no attention to this compliment. She frowned.

"You're wrong," she said, after a while. "I'm not that sort—the school marm. . . . But you *did* have an idea in that picture of yours. I think you wanted it to be ironic and terrible. And it wasn't."

It was only severe. You missed what you aimed at. But I *don't* care about ideas. . . .”

“Keep quiet, sensitive, egotistic, female thing!” said Lawrence Iverson. “Why do you care what I think about you? I don’t care—I couldn’t possibly care—what you thought about me. Now to show you—what mood are you trying to get in your little picture there? Explain it! If it means something, what does it mean? Eh?”

“It’s the sensation of an actress who knows she’s failing——”

“Oh bosh! Oh rot! Oh stale, idiotic futility! So we have here the portrait of a sensation! Well, here is what you want.”

He took Enid by the arm and pulled her to her feet; then he sat down on her chair and began to draw with her pen, in strong, fine, sure lines, the figure of a woman, in a strange attitude, half defiant, half cringing.

“There’s your silly idea,” he said. “Without any black dots or white stripes. . . . You can’t draw. No woman can. But it’s pretty to see them try. I approve. I approve of you all. Even the trying will give you some faint comprehension of what I accomplish. But now, my dear little souls, put down your work and let us become acquainted!”

II

“WASN’T he awful?” said Rosaleen, with a sigh of relief, when he had gone.

“Oh, I don’t know!” said Miss Mell. “That’s only his way. He’s really a very well known artist. . . . What are you laughing at, Enid?”

“At him,” she answered. “And his babyishness. And his airs. Why, he’s crazy about women. You can see *that*. I’ll have him eating out of my hand in a week or two.”

III

BUT the next morning when Miss Mell opened the door to put a bundle of rubbish out into the hall she found there a neat little package, and in it a sketch of Rosaleen standing with the mouse-trap in her hand, startled and puzzled.

“To you!” he had written. “Because you look just as a little female artist ought to look. All soul. Of course, you haven’t any soul. But I will help you to play being an artist, because of your lovely soulful artist eyes.”

“Hum!” said Enid. “She’d better not have that. It won’t do to let her get conceited. She’s too useful.”

And she tore it into pieces and threw it into the fire.

“My dear!” cried Miss Mell. “I don’t think that was right!”

“Rot!” said Enid. “He’s simply trying to show that he’s not attracted by me. Can’t you see?”

“What I can’t see,” said Miss Mell, thoughtfully. “Is—which is the most unbearably conceited—you or Lawrence Iverson?”

“He is,” said Enid, “because he’s older. It gets worse, always.”

He came up again that afternoon; and, though they hadn’t spoken of it, they were all three quite sure that he would come, and were waiting for him.

He went over to Miss Mell.

“Your work,” he said, “is entirely hopeless. And you don’t care. You’re really the cleverest of the lot. You know what you’re doing. You’re earning a living. . . . But I can’t look at it. It’s too obscene.”

She smiled good-humouredly, without looking up from the picture of a small boy and a big package of coffee “For My Mudder.”

“And you,” he said to Enid. “You’re so infernally puffed up with pride in your work and your fine body that you can’t see the truth. Nothing but

crazy visions. What you ought to be is an artist's model. That is what you were intended for."

"That's a part that wouldn't suit you very well," she answered, looking at his great, ungainly bulk.

"Cheap!" he said. "Cheap wit. Cheap impudence. My skeleton is largely covered with fat, which is a source of great discomfort to me. And it seems humourous to you. Very well; that is Enid. Now this sweet child, Rosaleen, is promising. She is innocent, naïve. She sees what is, because she is rather too stupid to imagine what is not. I am going to teach her."

"To see what is not, I suppose," said Enid. "Go ahead, then. Of course you'll spoil her. She was useful before. She used to cook the meals and go to market and sweep and mend our clothes. Now she'll want to *draw*."

"So she shall draw! She shall be my Galatea. I shall create an artist with my own breath."

He sat down beside the alarmed and confused Rosaleen and began to instruct her. He was wonderful. He explained with exquisite lucidity; he was patient, he was kind. But Rosaleen was too nervous to profit by his teaching. Her hand trembled pitifully.

"Very well, then, my dear," he said, kindly, "I'll wait until you're more used to me. But in the mean-

time, don't touch a pencil. Every stroke you draw is a step on the road to perdition."

He patted her shoulder and left her, and began walking up and down the room.

"Don't!" said Enid, impatiently. "It shakes the floor. . . . Sit down and smoke."

"I don't smoke."

"Why don't you work?"

"Still the school marm. You imagine you can 'be an artist' by sitting over your work all your life. You haven't the wit to see that art is the outcome of experience——"

"No, it isn't. Unless it's your ancestors' experience. It comes with you when you're born. Art is the result of impressions——"

"And how do you get impressions, woman, except through experience?"

"Some people can get a vivid impression by looking at a blank wall. It's inside, not outside. What you call experience is nothing but distractions, interruptions. . . ."

"Young woman, what *I* call experience *is* experience. I'm not a timid female thing."

Then he began to boast—of how he had lived, how he had felt, what he had seen. He swaggered amazingly, pacing up and down the room, stroking his little black mustache, continually fixing his

monocle with a tremendous grimace. Rosaleen was lost in bewilderment. She couldn't for the life of her tell whether he was joking or serious, whether his talk was brilliant or idiotic. She could get no clue from Miss Mell, for she was still working and apparently paying no heed. Enid's face had its usual fierce and scornful look, her voice its usual impatient vigour. She longed to have this man interpreted.

She waited until Enid had gone out to the theatre that evening, and then, when she and Miss Mell were alone together in their candle-lighted studio, with a fire burning and a great air of peace and comfort, she said:

“Isn’t that Mr. Iverson—queer?”

“Not so queer as he pretends to be,” she answered, which gave Rosaleen very little help.

“Don’t you think he’s—sort of like Enid?”

“Oh, mercy, no!” cried Miss Mell. “What makes you think that, Rosaleen?”

Rosaleen couldn’t quite explain.

“They’re both so—they’re such—they talk——”

“They’re both very rude, if that’s what you mean. But Enid’s rude because she’s so honest, and Iverson’s rude as a pose. He’s a famous poseur.”

That was Greek to Rosaleen. Miss Mell saw her puzzled frown and expatiated.

"I've met him before," she said. "He doesn't remember me, though. I've seen him two or three times. And I've heard a great deal about him. He's a remarkable man—in some ways. But a poseur. . . . He affects that bluntness, but he's not sincere. . . . I don't think anyone could be less like Enid. To begin with, he hasn't any self-control. They say he has the most terrific temper. He quarrels with everyone. And he's perfectly reckless; he doesn't care what he does. I've heard the most extraordinary stories about him. He's like a madman. And yet very greedy. He runs after people with money. While Enid—but you must know Enid a little by this time. She's never reckless. She always knows what she's doing, and she'd rather cut her heart out than do anything to injure her career. And as for toadying, she *couldn't*. She cares no more for money than a baby."

"You think a lot of Enid, don't you?"

"Yes, I do!" said Miss Mell.

There was a pause.

"Well—do you like—him?" asked Rosaleen.

"No," said Miss Mell. "Not much. And don't you, either!"

But Rosaleen couldn't help liking him!

He didn't come up the next afternoon. Rosaleen, going out on an errand, had of course to pass the

door of his studio on the floor below, and from within she heard a most pleasant sound of feminine voices, gay, light, well-bred voices. On her way in again, she had paused for just a moment outside that door, and the hidden festivity was still going on; she heard the clink of silver on china, and those nice voices again. Later on, from the window upstairs, she saw a motor car glide up to the door in the dusk and stand there waiting, until finally two exquisitely dressed women came out and entered it, escorted gallantly by Lawrence Iverson. They drove off, leaving him standing bare-headed in the street.

IV

MISS WATERS had become terribly excited when Rosaleen told her.

“My dear! Not *Lawrence Iverson!* Right in the same *house!* Isn’t that marvellous! Now tell me all about him!”

Rosaleen tried, but not very successfully.

“But come and see him for yourself,” she said. “He’s sure to come in again some afternoon soon.”

“Oh, no!” said Miss Waters, hastily. “I don’t think I will, dear. It would make me too nervous.”

After that she wasn’t seen so often at the studio. She would dart in during the morning, perhaps

leaving a pupil at her home, and chat with Rosaleen for a little while, but always on edge, ready to flit away. It made her very happy to observe the happiness of her favourite. And she alone was able to comprehend the things that made up that happiness. She could understand the joy that seized Rosaleen whenever she had been out on a frosty morning, when she crossed the snow-covered Square and entered the room with its crackling fire and saw the two girls working in absolute quiet. She loved even the careless and shiftless housekeeping, the things brought in from the delicatessen, salads in paper boats, cold sliced meats, buns, rolls, cakes. They rarely cooked anything; they went out every night to dinner, either to an Italian table d'hote or to the tea room in the basement; when Enid wasn't with them, they always asked Miss Waters, and frequently the two English girls who had a dressmaking establishment near by would join them. They were nice, jolly, sophisticated girls and Rosaleen liked them. She used to go now and then to their place, which they call "**FINE FEATHERS**," and they would give her "pointers" about making her own clothes.

The tea room in the basement was kept by the desperately lively girl who had been at the birthday party; she was from the Middle West, and she was

blessed with the name of Esther Gosorkus. She had enormous, babyish blue eyes and oily brown hair always done with a wide fillet of blue ribbon. She was enthusiastic and friendly and agreeable beyond belief; she adored everyone. Yet she was able to charge hair-raising prices for her food, and for the Antiques which she also sold down there. Enid always called her *The Fool*.

"She can't be a fool," said Miss Mell. "She's making pots of money."

"Plenty of fools can do that," said Enid. "Set a fool to catch a fool! Of course! They prey on one another."

Miss Gosorkus' connection with Art was vague; still she wore smocks and went to studio parties; she talked about the Artists' Colony, and considered that she belonged to it. She used to come up to the studio rather often, and had to talk to Rosaleen, because the other two gave her no encouragement. But Rosaleen thought her jolly and rather nice, and when she went out marketing, used to stop in at the Tea Room and Antique Shop and buy sandwiches for lunch, or if there were something palatable in course of preparation, she would buy three portions and bring them upstairs to her friends. Not very often, though; for she was fastidious about food, and Miss Gosorkus' methods seemed to her more

than questionable at times. She had to see it all done by Miss Gosorkus and the coloured cook before she would buy.

The mornings generally fled by in work of this unartistic nature, in marketing, in making up the cots, washing the dishes, and "attending to things." After lunch was eaten and cleared away she would always sit down resolved to work earnestly, but often Lawrence Iverson came in, and while he was there, she dared not draw a line.

v

PERHAPS the very foundation of her satisfaction with life lay in Lawrence Iverson's kindness. He would come swaggering up and talk outrageously, unpardonably to Enid, look with a groan over Miss Mell's shoulder and call her work "filth for the hungry hogs." But he would look at Rosaleen's dress designs and simpering fashion plates quite seriously, and advise her, with wonderfully practical advice.

What most touched her though was his niceness to Miss Waters. The poor old thing was trapped one day, and couldn't get away; had to stand there in all her preposterousness, in her fur coat and her battered hat, and allow that most elegant and criti-

cal artist to be presented to her. Rosaleen was frightened, thinking of Enid's rudeness. But Iverson was *not* rude; on the contrary he was very polite, very friendly. He talked to her about Paris, and she was transported to the Seventh Heaven. Just to recall the names of the streets! (She didn't know very much else of the city.) She went off with Rosaleen almost idiotic with pleasure.

"Lawrence," said Enid, when they had gone, "you make me *sick*!"

"Why?" he enquired, twirling his little mustache.

"You're a regular, old-fashioned stage villain," she said. "All the trouble you're taking—all the elaborate plots—to get that silly little kid."

"Hold your tongue!" he said, flushing angrily. "Let's have no more of your beastly female obsessions."

VI

Two days later he came upstairs unexpectedly early, before lunch, and found Rosaleen peeling mushrooms in the dark back room. It made him furious; he swore at Enid and Miss Mell and called them beastly exploiters.

"Rosaleen," he said. "Come downstairs with me and work."

“Don’t you go!” said Enid. “He’s a villain. He has evil designs upon you.”

Rosaleen turned crimson.

“Oh, go along!” said Miss Mell. “It’ll do you good, Rosaleen. You can take care of yourself.”

“Of course she can!” said Enid. “All the little burgesses know how to do that. Lawrence, if you want to love Rosaleen, you’ll have to pay for her mushrooms all the days of your life!”

CHAPTER THREE

I

HE took her by the hand and led her down the dark stairs, and flung open the door of his room ceremoniously. An immense room, which ran from the front to the back of the house. It was bare, plain, neat as a pin, no draperies, no artistic ornaments. And yet it had a fine air of luxury. There was a splendid wood fire in the grate, and before it stood a waggon with a silver tea service, brightly polished. Every one of the chairs, ranged severely against the walls, was rare and beautiful; the rug on the floor was a fine Chinese one. The walls were bare, not a single picture to be seen but the one he was completing, on an easel near the window.

He was wonderfully polite. He settled Rosaleen at a little table and brought her all the materials she required.

“Now, my dear child,” he said. “Just what is it you want to do?”

“Well,” said Rosaleen. “I’m afraid I’ve got to think about making money.”

"Ah! Who hasn't? Very well, then, so you shall!"

He encouraged her very much. She sat at the little table working patiently all the afternoon. They hardly spoke. He was at work on his own canvas, but he took time now and then to go over to Rosaleen and make a suggestion or a correction. She had never worked so well before; the finished figures delighted her.

When the light began to fail, he pushed the easel into a corner and stretched.

"Now, nice Rosaleen, make tea!" he said.

She did her best, but tea-making was an exotic art for her; she understood nothing of its possibilities.

"Dear creature!" he cried. "I don't want a concentrated essence of tea!"

He took the charge from her, and began very deftly to do it himself. Then he handed her a cup of delicate, fragrant, clear amber liquid (which she privately considered much too weak). She drank it dutifully, disappointed that there wasn't so much as a cracker or a piece of bread to go with it.

"Shall I wash the tea things for you?" she asked, when they had finished.

He smiled.

"I have a person for that, thank you. No; let's talk instead. We've never had a talk alone. . . . Won't you tell me something about yourself?"

With her release from the Humbertian atmosphere, Rosaleen had lost her former humility. None of these people would care in the least who her mother was. She wasn't ashamed now. She was rather glad of a chance to place herself, to explain that she wasn't "Miss Humbert." She told him candidly, and he seemed to hang on her words. Indeed, his interest became embarrassing, for after she had ceased to speak, he still continued to stare at her with a curious intensity. Somehow his face looked *different*..... She stirred uneasily.

"I'd better be going, I think," she said.
"They'll——"

But he stopped her as she was about to get up, with a hand on her arm.

"No!" he said. "No! . . ."

"Why?" she asked.

His great staring eyes made her terribly uneasy.

"I'll really have to go," she said. "It's late."

He let her rise this time, but rose himself as well, and suddenly caught her in his arms.

She was for an instant too much astounded to struggle. But as he tried to kiss her, she gave him a vigorous push.

"Let me go!" she cried. "What's the *matter* with you?"

He couldn't delude himself that she was acting; he could see too plainly the horrified incredulity in her eyes. He saw that he had made a mistake.

He released her at once.

"Rosaleen!" he said. "I—apologise!"

She turned away without answering and went to the door. But he went in front of her.

"Don't be unreasonable!" he said. "I'm sorry. I can't say any more, can I? I didn't mean anything. Shake hands and say you forgive me!"

Rosaleen shook her head.

"I can't!" she said, with a faint sob. "You don't—you *couldn't* know—how I hate anything of that sort. . . . And *you*! . . . I didn't think it was *in* you."

"It's *in* all men," said Lawrence, gloomily.

"No, it isn't!" said Rosaleen, thinking of that one quite perfect man she had lost.

"I tell you it is!" said Lawrence, beginning to grow angry. "What do you know about men?"

Rosaleen didn't answer, but he saw a tear running down her cheek.

"Bah!" he shouted. "Don't be tragic, for God's sake! Why should you make such a row about

that? You're none the worse, are you, in health, morals or purse, because I tried to kiss you?"

"Yes, I am!" said she, stubbornly. "I've lost something I thought a lot of. . . . My confidence in——"

"Don't say confidence in me! I won't allow women to have confidence in me. It's insulting. Go on, if you want to! Go upstairs and cry and snivel and have a scene with your two precious friends."

She was half way up the stairs when he came bounding after her.

"Rosaleen!" he whispered. "Please! Be friends again! I'm sorry. But I'm sure you understand!"

Against the ancient flattery of that appeal she had no defense. She took the big hand he proffered.

"All right!" she said, with her absurd, her heavenly benevolence.

II

AFTER that he behaved very well. He was a most gallant and generous friend, and a valuable one. In spite of his swagger, his bombastic talk, in spite of his fatness and foppishness, he had undeniably a grand air, a sort of magnificence. He saw to it that she was well treated by the others,

and that she had an advantage over them. It lay in his hands to bestow prestige, and he did so. She became tenfold more important, more significant. He knew how to manage this. He gave Rosaleen privileges which he permitted to no one else. Enid and Dodo were very rarely invited into his studio, but Rosaleen worked there two or three days a week.

He hadn't gone so far as to be seen in public with her, though. He didn't even take her to his own exhibition. He was a conspicuous and, in certain circles, a well-known figure; he was very careful. He sometimes gave her tickets for private views, and so on, or even for theatres and concerts. He sent up chocolates and flowers from time to time, and the foreign art journals to which he subscribed. But he drew a line. He never asked Rosaleen into his studio when there was anyone there. More than once when she had come down as she had been told to do the day before, and knocked at his door, he would put out his head and stare at her through his monocle.

"Not to-day!" he would say. "Wait till I'm alone."

Enid used to jeer at this.

"Sent home?" she would say, when Rosaleen returned so promptly. But Rosaleen refused to resent this.

"Why in the world should he introduce me to his friends?" she asked. "He only knows me in a—oh, a sort of business way."

"He doesn't think you're good enough," said Enid.

"Maybe I'm not," said Rosaleen, unruffled. "I dare say he knows lots of people who wouldn't want to be bothered with me."

Not Enid nor Lawrence, nor anyone about her could understand her attitude. They thought her humble, lacking in pride. Even Miss Mell advised her to assert herself more. Whereas it *wasn't* really humility, or lack of pride or self-respect; it was her exquisite Irish sense of propriety. She knew exactly where she belonged. And she didn't hesitate to place Lawrence higher than herself. He was an incomparably greater artist, he was much more important, much more clever. As for his moral worth, she didn't take that into consideration. She never had made, she never would make, the least effort to judge the morals of other people. She had quite forgiven him his unique outburst, both because he was an artist and outside the pale, and because she liked him. She had more indulgence for him, in fact, than she would have had for her hero, Nick Landry. No doubt because she didn't expect very much from

Lawrence. She went ahead, enjoying his companionship without the least distrust.

He couldn't have been nicer. To please her he even went so far as to go with her to Miss Waters' studio. He had met Rosaleen in the street, on her way there.

"She'd be so awfully pleased!" Rosaleen told him. "She admires your work so much."

He was good-humoured that afternoon, and lazy, indisposed for work; so he turned and walked along with her, like an opulent foreign prince in his impressive fur-lined overcoat and his soft grey felt hat pulled down over his swarthy brow.

He didn't stay long. Once in the street again he turned on Rosaleen with a scowl.

"Why didn't you *tell* me?" he thundered, in a voice so loud that all the passersby turned to stare.

"Tell you what?" Rosaleen asked, frightened.

"What the woman did in there? Why didn't you tell me what blasphemous crimes she committed? Good God! The woman should be flayed alive!"

"Oh, don't!" entreated Rosaleen. "Please don't talk so loud—and please don't say horrible things about Miss Waters!"

"Stop!" he said. "Never mention that name again!"

Rosaleen was glad to escape from him that time, and she never did mention Miss Waters' name to him again.

III

THE time came inevitably when they felt the call to give a party. It was almost simultaneous; they never knew quite whose idea it was. They were all of them filled with enthusiasm, but it was more tremendous for Rosaleen, because it was her first.

They borrowed a phonograph from the "FINE FEATHERS" girls, and Miss Mell seriously undertook to teach Rosaleen to dance. Every evening after dinner Enid would put on a dance record and Miss Mell, pinning up her skirt so that her feet could the better be observed, would steer Rosaleen through the steps of fox-trot, one-step and waltz. Enid would criticise. But even she admitted that Rosaleen had a gift.

"It's Irishness," she said. "They're all nice dancers, I notice; all those downtrodden, suffering nations, Poles and Irish, and so on. Queer, isn't it?"

The invitations circulated mysteriously and casually, and were as casually accepted. But it was none the less a festivity which required great prep-

arations. Rosaleen bought a new dress and Miss Mell made over an old one. But Enid refused to make any further concession than a new blouse, to be worn with her everyday skirt. And yet, on the night of the party, when she was dressed, she was amazing. It was a low cut blouse, and quite thin enough to reveal the matchless lines of her shoulders, the perfection of her supple arms, her lovely throat. And she wore a pearl necklace, a genuine one, which she never explained. It was the first time that Rosaleen had realised her striking beauty, or the full extent of her arrogant charm. Even in her new dress, with her hair arranged so prettily, she felt, for a moment, just a little miserable beside Enid.

Miss Mell was dumpy and unobtrusive and correct, and according to her custom, completely covered by a large gingham apron until the last minute. She and Rosaleen cooked the early dinner, but Rosaleen couldn't eat and she would hardly allow them to, either. She hurried them so anxiously, so that she could get everything ready before the party came. Enid sprinkled powdered wax on the floor, and Rosaleen and Miss Mell pushed all the furniture back against the walls. Then they lighted all the candles, under their purple and yellow shades; then on a table in a corner they arranged their refreshments, salad, cake and sandwiches got from Miss Gosor-

kus, and a bowl of punch. Miss Mell had oiled the phonograph and bought some new records, and she instructed Rosaleen in the art of manipulating it.

“Be careful when you wind it up!” she cautioned. “Something’s wrong. It rocks so. I’m afraid of its tipping off the table.”

The preparations were completed very early, and the happy Rosaleen had nothing to do but sit near the window to wait, where she could see the lights glittering up Fifth Avenue, and the buses sailing to and fro.

Presently Enid joined her, sat on the window sill, perfectly still, perfectly silent. She didn’t even move when Lawrence came in, urbane and indulgent, in evening dress. Rosaleen and Miss Mell welcomed him with smiles; they were, and they were willing to show that they were, tremendously flattered at his coming to their party.

“I’ve brought some champagne,” he said. “It’s in the hall, in a pail of ice.”

“How *nice!*” said Miss Mell.

He bowed politely. Then he turned his attention to Enid, sitting on the window sill.

“Well, my beauty!” he said, in his harsh voice, “Looking out there for a new sweetheart?”

Enid’s voice came, singularly flat and dispirited.

“No,” she said. And after a pause. “I dare say

I was looking for God. . . . What an empty looking heaven, isn't it?"

"On the contrary. I hear it's extraordinarily crowded with planets and constellations and that sort of thing. And probably ghosts."

"Do you believe in ghosts—really?"

"No, my dear; I have no fears."

"Fears!" cried Enid. "Fears! . . . I wouldn't call it a *fear*. I'd call it a hope. . . . Oh! Don't I wish I could see a ghost! I'm—I'm always looking for something like that. Something to show that we don't end."

"Aha! You're afraid of death, are you?"

"No!" she said, impatiently. "Don't you understand? I don't care when or how I go. I don't care whether I become an angel or a devil, or a puff of breath in a great god's mouth. Or a ghost. So long as it doesn't *end*."

"It *does* end," said Lawrence. "Rest assured of that."

"Don't you care?"

"My dear creature, I shall never know it. I'll never be conscious of this highly unpleasant annihilation. It's only the dread of it. And that doesn't exist if you refuse to think of it."

"But suppose there's someone else you're longing and longing to see again?"

"Now!" he cried, triumphantly. "Now we're getting at the mystery of your life. It's a dead lover!"

"Oh! You and your beastly obsession with lovers!" she cried, almost with a sob. "It's a—child's ghost. . . ."

"Be thankful it's out of this brutal, hostile world, then," said Lawrence. "Where's Rosaleen? She lives in another nice little world, all by herself."

"Perhaps hers is the real world," said Enid. "I wish I could think so."

IV

It was a wonderful ecstatic evening, the sort Rosaleen expected of artists. The studio was crowded, suffocatingly hot, filled with a joyful young riot. Except for Lawrence, they were all young. There was Miss Gosorkus and a man she had brought, there were the two English girls with three of their countrymen, there was a male cousin of Miss Mell's and three young ships' officers known to her, and two old friends from her art school. There was a distract young Frenchman desperately in love with Enid, and a lot of other people who drifted in and out. There was a terrific amount of noise; they were wilfully, exaggeratedly noisy; they

sang, shouted and stamped. The old phonograph blared its loudest, and the couples danced as best they could in the crowd. They drank the punch and the champagne and grew wilder and wilder. Rosaleen, astonished and delighted, believed herself actually to be witnessing one of those "orgies" so often mentioned in the papers as taking place in artists' studios. It was not till long, long afterward that she realised how innocent, how decent, how happy it really was, how young. . . .

At first she was rather ignored. Enid was so dazzling that she captured all the strangers, and the rest of the crowd all knew Dodo Mell and went to her in preference to Rosaleen. But, by the time the thing was in full swing, she, too, had at last secured the exclusive attention of someone; she, too, like Enid, like Devery, younger of the English girls, like the two Art School girls, had a man standing at her side and admiring her when he wasn't dancing with her. She didn't know his name or who he was, but he was amusing and rather attractive; a curly-haired, black-eyed young man, looking rather like a sprightly devil, with outstanding ears which gave him a singularly alert air.

Suddenly, almost of one accord, they all wearied of dancing.

“Let’s go out somewhere,” said Rosaleen’s young man. It was the classic suggestion, and they all agreed joyfully.

“I’ll take you all to the Brevoort for supper,” said the magnificent Lawrence.

Rosaleen was passing about a basket of cigarettes, and she happened at that instant to be standing at his elbow. And she said, with polite and surprised joy:

“*How nice!*”

He turned and looked at her, fixed his monocle and stared at her.

“I’d forgotten all about *you!*” he said. “What are *you* doing?”

“Having a lovely time!” she told him, with a smile.

“You look very pretty,” he said. “Very sweet. . . .”

And she fancied, half ashamed of the fancy, that again his face changed as it had done that afternoon in his studio.

He bent his lordly head.

“I want to speak to you!” he whispered. “Slip into the back room and wait!”

A little reluctant, but very curious, she did so; and for five very long minutes stood in there, with

the gas turned low, and the two cots piled with imposing male overcoats and sticks, and the furs and wraps of the girls. The sound of the music and the dancing feet made her impatient: someone shouted "One more before we go! Put on a *good* record, Enid!" She really couldn't have endured it much longer, if Lawrence hadn't come. But, though he had said he wanted to speak to her, he stood there speechless, fingering his monocle, not even looking at her. At last he said:

"Er . . . Rosaleen! . . . It occurred to me—wouldn't you like to stop for your Miss Waters?"

She thought she had never heard a kinder, a more generous idea.

"Why, yes, I *would!*" she said. "It's very nice of you to think of that!"

"Then we'd better arrange this way. You go downstairs with the others, but slip into my studio. The door's open and it's dark; no one will notice you. Then I'll make some excuse to get away from them, and I'll come back here with a taxi."

"A taxi! We won't need a taxi. It's only a step. And I don't see why we need to make such a secret of it all——"

"Enid would make a row," he said with a frown. "No; do it my way, if you please!"

THE dawn was coming when the taxi drew up to the door. Lawrence got out, helped Rosaleen to descend, and while he paid the enormous reckoning she stood in the dim street, over which hung that strange air of suspense which comes before the sunrise. The street lights still burned, but against a palely clear sky; the sparrows in the park were beginning to stir.

Lawrence opened the front door with his key and they entered the dark hall, musty with the smell of cooking, of paints. Outside his own door he held out a hand and she took it; an immense, fat hand.

“Now then, it’s all *right*, isn’t it?” he said, with exaggerated heartiness. “No ill feeling, is there? We’re the best of friends?”

“Oh, yes!” said Rosaleen, brightly, and in her mind added:

“If only I can get away from you and never, never set eyes on you again . . . !”

A desolating weariness was upon her; her limbs were like lead as she climbed the stairs. Her chief desire was not to wake Mell and Bainbridge; the idea of having to talk to them, to open her lips even to answer them, was intolerable. She had had her fill of talking that night.

For the sake of ventilation the girls always slept with the curtains between the rooms drawn back and the studio windows open; and so it was now. She could see them there in the back room, solemnly still, on their cots, with the faint breeze of the sunrise blowing through the big room and lifting a fine, cindery dust from the hearth. Rosaleen sat down near the window and rested her head on her arms, on the broad sill.

Now that the sun had got up, the whole thing began to assume the character of a nightmare. Her tired brain began to confuse the memory of Lawrence with the drawing of a gargoyle she had seen in his studio the day before. In a blurred memory she seemed to see him as a sort of monster who had for hours and hours been sitting by her side and talking. Talking and talking and talking. And about what, do you suppose, but to urge her to run away with him. She had said she didn't want to, but he had considered that of no importance. He had considered it a matter for logic, for reasoning. He had tried to show her the advantages; and when she persisted in saying that she *didn't want to*, he had become offensive and horrible. He had never had the faintest intention of going after Miss Waters; the taxi, by his command, went speeding through Central Park, up Riverside Drive, went on through

roads and streets unknown to her, while Lawrence talked, shouted, bullied her. She had never imagined anything so horrible. And yet she wasn't afraid of him. Perhaps some feminine instinct informed her that a talking man, like a barking dog, is not to be feared.

And, quite suddenly, touched by some obscure impulse, he had become sorry. He had called himself a brute and a beast; he said he must have been mad, and she was privately inclined to agree with him. She didn't know that it was his theory that women are to be won by force, by daring. With her, love could only be the outcome of sympathy. She could only love a man because she liked him. But she was not so much angry at Lawrence as disgusted and astonished. When he begged for her forgiveness she gave it promptly, and hoped that this would be the end of this immeasurably painful scene. But it was not enough. Nothing would do but a reconciliation, and for this it appeared necessary to go to a road house and have supper and more champagne. She sat at the table with him in the crowded, noisy dining-room, while he acted the jovial host; she had a constrained but polite smile for his pleasantries. She had been as diplomatic with him as if he had been a lunatic.

All the way home he had worshipped her as an angel. He said he wasn't fit to live in the same world with her. . . .

And now, with the world awake, the sun shining, the streets alive, for the first time since the wretched fiasco, Rosaleen began to weep for young Landry.

CHAPTER FOUR

I

SHE needn't have worried; neither Enid nor Dodo Mell asked a single question. Somewhere near ten o'clock Enid woke up and at once shook her sleepy friend, who, after putting on her spectacles and a lavender kimono, set to work to make coffee. And suddenly discovered Rosaleen asleep in a chair in the studio.

"Coffee, Rosaleen!" she called, cheerfully.

She awoke with a start and sat up, pale and dishevelled, in her party dress and slippers. But they showed no surprise. Breakfast was ready on a trunk in the back room and they all sat down to it, the benign Dodo in her kimono, Enid in a smock and petticoat, with her bare feet in mules, and Rosaleen with her incongruously dissipated look.

"*Nice* rolls!" said Enid. "Where'd you get them, Rosaleen?"

"A little new baker's," Rosaleen answered.

Never had her friends seemed so charming, or a feminine world so desirable. The coffee cheered her sad heart, and raised her spirits, and after she had

bathed and dressed, she lost all sense of fatigue. She had, in fact, that false vigour one sometimes has after a sleepless night, that sensation of being all mind and spirit and no body.

“Ambrose is coming this afternoon!” called Miss Mell, suddenly, from her drawing, to Rosaleen washing handkerchiefs in the rusty sink.

“Who’s Ambrose?” she asked.

“Oh, my dear, how cruel! Why, he’s the one who adored you so last night. He’s my cousin.”

Rosaleen recollected the young man like a sprightly devil, with the curly hair and the outstanding ears.

“I’d better tidy up the place then,” she said. “It’s awful.”

“I’ll treat us all to cakes for tea,” said Dodo. “If you’ll get them, Rosaleen?”

“And there are two dead mice in the trap,” said Enid. “Better take them out!”

Rosaleen protested; this was an intolerable task. But Dodo and Enid assured her that the mice would stay there until she removed them.

“And every day it’ll be worse,” said Enid.

So Rosaleen was obliged to drop the little victims into an empty cracker box and throw them out of the window at the back of the hall. She fetched the cakes and borrowed an extra cup from Miss

Gosorkus. Then she sat down listlessly. Her work was all in Lawrence's studio, and she had nothing to do.

II

AMBROSE MATTHEWS was, in fact, a very welcome distraction. He came that afternoon, and he was so nicely entertained that he returned again and again, nearly every day. Enid said she didn't mind as long as he waited until five o'clock, because then the light wasn't any good. Miss Mell was not disturbed by talking, or by walking, or by singing or by dancing while she worked, and Rosaleen, it must be confessed, cared very little whether she worked at all, or not.

Ambrose was a young man with an obsession. Two generations ago it would have been called Love; one generation past would have called it Women; but he, of course, called it Sex. He was a writer, he said. His father supported him, so that he didn't need to be "commercial." He was indeed so uncommercial that his creations never got beyond his own brain. However, he was only twenty-two, and still regarding his world.

The talk, during his visits, was supposed to be stimulating, and it resolved itself into a sort of duel between Ambrose and Rosaleen, in which Enid

was the young man's perverse second and Miss Mell assisted Rosaleen in her defense.

He used to bring lurid little magazines of strange shapes and colours, things that never lasted more than a few months.

"Why do they publish the things?" asked Miss Mell. "They certainly can't pay. And nobody could possibly enjoy them."

"Listen to this!" said Ambrose. "It's *good!*"

And then would follow the expression of some individual's point of view, which was called an "article," always about fallen women, race suicide, and so on. It appeared from these little publications that it was not only necessary but "sincere" and altogether praiseworthy to repeat all the well-known facts and statistics on these subjects over and over, endlessly. No matter how trite, or how biased, so long as the author was "sincere" and stuck to more or less forbidden topics, his "article" *must* be published, and his opinion *must* be respected. It was a crime against society not to be eternally interested in these things.

Rosaleen was well aware that Ambrose had no intentions toward her of a personal nature; he was simply mildly attracted by her. But as a matter of principle he was forever urging on her his point of view. He couldn't endure her inviolable reserve;

it made him furious that she would not discuss these things. He was always saying how incomplete was the life of a woman without an "affair." And he was not content with dissertations upon the influence of love on the soul; he became medical and pathological and sociological. According to him, the life of a spinster was not only anti-social and morbid; it was a sort of suicide; it led inevitably to madness and death. Facts did not disturb him; the numbers of self-respecting celibate women he was naturally obliged to meet, who were neither ill nor mad, and who were quite as happy as the married women, convinced him not at all. All these women, he insisted, were either absorbed in secret love-affairs, or—or they could not and did not exist. He denied them.

"I'll tell you what's the matter with you and your professors and your doctors and your writers," said Enid, one day. "It makes you all frantic to think that women can get along without you. Well, they can and they do, plenty of them."

Ambrose said, no, they didn't. Or if they did, they were dreadfully unhappy.

"No more unhappy than *with* them," said Enid.

As for Rosaleen, she said nothing. She didn't agree with either Ambrose or Enid. She felt that she should have liked very much to have a husband

and children, but that, if they never came to her, she should nevertheless manage to live a fairly pleasant and happy life. She knew, however, that this was not a "view," and that no one would have been interested in hearing it.

In spite of his fixed idea, they not only tolerated Ambrose, but they were rather fond of him. He filled a gap. He was, in a way, their pet. They liked to see his curly head leaning against the back of their big wing chair; they liked to hear his voice, and to smell the smoke of his pipe. He was another young thing in their young world; and what in later life was to be highly unpleasant, was now, at twenty-three, harmless and laughable.

Lawrence never came. Dodo and Enid saw that there was a mystery here, and they spoke of it to each other more than once. Sometimes they laughed and sometimes they were angry. The way in which he had invited everyone to supper and then run off and left the others to pay! But they didn't mention it to Rosaleen, and she, in despair of ever being able to explain that extraordinary evening, never brought up the subject. But they all missed him. Once in a while Miss Mell would say, "There goes Lawrence!" and they would run to the window, to see him, in his great fur-lined coat and silk hat, getting into a taxi, off to one of those teas where he

so shone. He was inordinately fond of "society": they read his name in the papers in connection with all sorts of pageants, charity balls, amateur theatraclals, costume dances. He said he did it to get business, but that wasn't quite true. He did it because he liked it; because he liked the idle and seductive women who flattered him. He had sitters, too, women who came in elegant limousines and had tea with him. He never raised his eyes to the windows above.

III

BUT one day early in April, just before the Spring came, he appeared, just as usual, in the doorway.

"Hello!" said Enid, carelessly. "We didn't expect *you*. We haven't any cup for your tea. We broke our only extra one this morning."

"The obliging Dorothy Mell will go down to my room and get one," said he, "also a package of chocolates on the table by the window. Eh?"

She did, and she brought up all Rosaleen's work and left it secretly in the back room.

Lawrence was unusually polite. He asked them all how they were getting on, and listened with interest while they told him. They were all a little proud of their progress. Miss Mell had three big orders ahead of her. Enid was going to have an

exhibition with three other young and arrogantly unpopular artists. And Rosaleen was more or less regularly employed by a magazine to do each month a page of—if you can believe that such things exist—"childrens' fashions."

"You're all doing very nicely," he said. "I'm very much pleased. I came up to give you my blessing before I go."

"Before you go!" said Miss Mell. "Where are you going?"

"I'm giving up my place downstairs, and tomorrow, *to-morrow*, I'm off to Paris! Paris the kind, Paris the friendly! Paris the beneficent goddess of my student days! I have a nostalgia, my children. . . . So I shall kiss you all good-bye and give you a little fatherly advice before leaving . . ."

He swaggered over to Rosaleen's table.

"No reason why you shouldn't become successful," he said. "You must know, my children, that brains are not necessary to an artist. An artist can be absolutely crude and ignorant, and yet be a genius. He needs only an ardent spirit. Of course, you haven't got that, Rosaleen, but then you're not an artist. But take this Enid girl. Give her a certain amount of knowledge, as definite as that of a brick-layer; teach this woman to draw, and she *will* be an artist—of a sort. She doesn't need to know

anything else. She won't need to read, or to think . . .”

“Oh, so you're beginning to see me, are you?” said Enid.

“I always did see you, my dear. You're very nice to see. Children, listen to my advice. If a woman wishes to make herself irresistible, after attending to personal appearance, I recommend her to become an artist or an actress. Nothing else will give her the same prestige—not even a lot of money. There's a rakishness about it—a spiciness. It gives a piquancy even to Rosaleen.”

He laughed.

“Good Lord!” he said. “How they all love us! It's queer. . . . Of all artists, the painter is the favourite with the public. To most of them, artist *means* painter. . . . And yet, thinking it over, it's not so hard to understand this favouritism. The painter is apt to be more ordinary, more normal, more human, than the poet or the musician. His art is more obvious, more facile. It certainly requires less ‘temperament.’ The painter is not required to be erratic and morbid. In fact, a proper painter is expected to be more or less rollicking. I ask you to consider for a moment the popular idea of what goes on in our studios! The public imagines the poet sitting up all night writing in ecstasy, the musi-

cian forever before his instrument. But the painter! Lord! They never think of us as *working*. We're supposed to be eternally pawning our dead mother's ring for money for Bohemian orgies, to be rowdy and care-free and generous, and all that sort of thing. The painter is the only artist that the public likes to see happy."

"Of course it's the easiest art to understand," said Enid.

"Don't talk, woman, but listen and try to learn. There's no question here of 'understanding' art. But it's easier and pleasanter for people to look at a painting, which takes only a minute, than it is to listen to an opera, or to read an epic. . . . So I advise you all to be artists, my children, and to enjoy yourselves."

Then he solemnly kissed them each good-bye.
And after that, no more of Lawrence for a long time.

CHAPTER FIVE

MISS WATERS was clearing out her desk that morning. She had a pupil drawing in the studio, but it was a pupil who was meek and ignorant and could be left alone. She was trying to figure out just how much she owed, writing in an exercise book, with great precision, the amount, the date, and the nature of each bill.

WILLIAM WELLS—GROCER—EGGS, COFFEE,
BREAD, JAM—MAY 4TH, 1915. \$3.07.

That was an old one. . . . Bills for paints, brushes, paper, for headache powders, cold cream and “druggists’ sundries,” for framing, bills of carpenters, coal and wood men, icemen, butchers. And she had got into one of her panics, at the sight of all these debts, and the thought of her penniless old age. Her mind would rush round like a little animal in a cage, looking for a chance of escape. She felt trapped and terrified. She didn’t know how to earn or how to save. She foresaw herself starving in a garret, dying in the ward of a hospital, going mad, being paralysed and helpless, all the spectres that haunted her hours of serious thought.

There was a ring at the door bell. She didn’t go.

She always waited hoping that the presumable collector would go away. But it rang again and again, and at last the meek little pupil called out, "I think your bell is ringing, Miss Waters!" So finally she opened the door, to see there the obliging little Italian fruiterer.

"Telephone!" he cried, in great excitement.
"Telephone, Missa Wata!"

Having no telephone in her own flat, Miss Waters had long ago made an "arrangement" with Tony, by which she was permitted to give her friends his telephone number, and was to be summoned by him when anyone of them should call for her. It didn't happen very often.

"Oh, my!" she said. "I'm so busy! Do you know who it is, Tony?"

He shook his head.

"Telephone!" he cried, again.

"Er—chi?" she enquired. "Chi, Tony?"

"Doan know!" he cried, in distress. "Doan know! Missa Wata coma quick!"

She slipped into a rain-coat and hurried out to the little shop on the corner, where at the back, among barrels and boxes and crates and a pungent smell of oranges, was Tony's telephone. She picked up the receiver.

“Ye-hes?” she enquired, in her most cultivated voice.

“Number please!” said the operator.

“I don’t want a number,” Miss Waters explained.
“Someone called me!”

“Your party’s hung up!” said the operator.

Miss Waters didn’t comprehend, but Tony’s wife, an opulent young woman nursing a big baby, exclaimed:

“Your fren, she no wait. You come too slow. She go away. Gooda-bye.”

Miss Waters was frantically distressed, and protested through the telephone. But the operator had no consolation to give her, and Tony and his wife were smiling and indifferent. She left the shop, after buying an orange to placate Tony, and returned to her flat. But her distress did not subside; she felt that she had been called upon and had not responded, that in some way she had failed someone.

And suddenly came to the conclusion that it must have been Rosaleen. She “just felt” that it was. And it worried her beyond measure. She knew that Rosaleen was quite alone in her studio now, for Mell and Bainbridge had gone to Provincetown for the month of July, and she felt sure that something was wrong. Rosaleen wouldn’t have called her out for nothing. She peered into the studio; the meek

pupil was still drawing a "study" of empty boxes; then she hurried out of the flat and back to Tony's fruit store.

It was Rosaleen's own voice that answered, and she gave an odd cry:

"Miss Waters! . . . I'd been trying . . ."

"I thought so, dear! Was there——"

"Please come right away!" Rosaleen interrupted her, with desperate earnestness. "Just as quickly as you possibly can! Please, *please* hurry!"

"What's wrong, my dear?"

"Oh, never *mind*! I'll tell you when you get here. Hurry!"

Her great anxiety made the poor old soul slower than ever. With fumbling, trembling fingers she tried to dress in such a way as to be ready for any emergency; then she went into the studio to excuse herself to the pupil, and couldn't get away from her; stood there saying utterly unnecessary things, repeating herself. At last she was hurrying across the park in the glare of the July sun, trying to walk her fastest, but with a nightmare sensation of being as stiff as a wooden doll, and covering no ground. She hurried up the dark stairs and knocked on the studio door. It was flung open and Rosaleen confronted her.

She gave a shriek of terror.

"Rosaleen!" she cried. "Oh! . . . Rosaleen!"

To see neat, fair Rosaleen like this, white as a ghost, with her hair half down, her dress spattered with blood! . . .

"What *is* it? What *is* it?" she cried.

"Hush!" whispered Rosaleen, shaking her arm. "Keep quiet! You've got to help me!"

Miss Waters followed her into the back room, but she couldn't suppress another scream. For there on one of the cots lay the enormous bulk of a man, with his eyes closed and his hair dank and wet across his brow.

"What shall I do with him?" whispered Rosaleen.

"Who *is* he?" Miss Waters asked.

"Why, Lawrence Iverson, of course!"

"What's the matter with him, Rosaleen?" Miss Waters cried. "Is he—drunk?"

"No! He tried to kill himself!"

"Mercy!"

"He cut his wrist with a knife, and said he was going to bleed to death——"

"Send for a doctor *quickly!*"

"No! Then he'd be put in prison. It's against the law." They both stared helplessly at the silent man.

"We ought to tie it up," said Miss Waters..

"I did. I don't think it's bleeding any more. But I'm afraid it was too late. He wouldn't let me touch it at first. Oh, Miss Waters! Is he dying?"

Miss Waters couldn't help thinking so; anyone who lay quiet with closed eyes and a face as white as that was presumably dying.

"I think you *ought* to get a doctor," she said. "You might be accused of murdering him."

"I can't help it," said Rosaleen. "I told him I wouldn't."

"Did he talk?"

"Yes, lots. He came in while I was eating my lunch. . . . Came bursting in the moment I opened the door. And he said he'd lost everything—he said 'Heaven had mocked him' . . . Then he said, 'Rosaleen, I'm going to kill myself, and I must have you near me when I die,' and he took a knife out of his pocket . . . Oh! . . ."

She gripped Miss Waters' hand violently, struggling against a sort of convulsion of sickness and terror.

"Oh! No, no, no! Don't comfort me, or anything. . . . I've *got* to brace up . . . If I let go . . . one minute . . . I'll scream!"

Miss Waters felt that if Rosaleen screamed, she would go mad. With trembling hands she took off her jacket and hat, and laid them on a chair.

"Shall we give him some brandy?"

"I haven't any."

"I'll run out and get some."

Rosaleen blanched at the thought of waiting alone with her sinister guest, but she gallantly agreed. And Miss Waters put on her things again and went, with weak knees and pounding heart, down the stairs to the street. She didn't know where to get brandy; she stood irresolutely outside the house for a moment; then she hurried to the **FINE FEATHERS**' shop and approached the elder partner, Miss Sillon.

"I want some brandy for a sick person!" she whispered. "Have you any?"

"Yes, I have!" answered Miss Sillon. "What *is* the matter, Miss Waters? You look absolutely done up. Who's sick?"

"Oh, no one special!" cried Miss Waters, in mortal terror lest this acute young woman should penetrate the mystery.

Miss Sillon asked no more questions, but fetched a small flask and gave it to Miss Waters.

"Call on me, you know, if you want anything," she said. "I'm awfully practical!"

"Oh, no, thank you!" said Miss Waters. "I—I—I have a trained nurse and a doctor waiting. . . ."

Rosaleen let her in.

“He’s groaning now,” she said. “Is that a good sign, do you think?”

Miss Waters shook her head.

“Here’s the brandy,” she said.

“How do you give it?” asked Rosaleen. “With water? Hot? Out of a spoon?”

Miss Waters reflected. Then she remembered often having seen in moving pictures flasks being held to the lips of injured persons. So Rosaleen lifted up his head and Miss Waters poured a little brandy down his throat. He opened his great black eyes and fixed her with a sombre, dreadful stare.

“Oh, mercy!” she cried.

Rosaleen hastily laid his head back on the pillow and came round to look at him.

“Mr. Iverson!” she cried. “Are you better?”

He groaned and flung his arms across his face. And began to sob in a hoarse, heart-rending voice.

“Oh, Lawrence dear!” she cried, kneeling down beside him. “What is the trouble? What can I do for you?”

His great body was shaking with the violence of his sobs. Rosaleen put her arms about him.

“Please don’t cry!” she entreated.

She tried gently to take his arms away, so that she could see his face, but he resisted, and she was afraid to persist, for fear of hurting his bandaged

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wrist. She laid her cheek against his hands and clasped him tighter, suffering with him, in anguish at his despair.

“Tell me!” she said. “What can I do for you?”

Very slowly he took down his arms and let her see his awful face, his desperate and forlorn regard.

“Well!” he said. “What do you imagine you can do? *I'm going blind!*”

BOOK THREE: FORLORN ROSALEEN

CHAPTER ONE

I

AT first he couldn't believe it. He thought it was; he followed her for two blocks; then he decided it wasn't, and suddenly she had stopped to look in a shop window, and he knew. He was shocked. This the pretty, endearing kid of two years ago, this haggard, hollow-cheeked woman so shabbily dressed, without gloves, with worn old boots, with that air of haste and anxiety!

“Rosaleen!” he said.

She whirled round and looked into his face with startled eyes.

“Why!” she cried. “*Mr. Landry!*”

He took her little bare hand and looked down at her, distressed beyond measure by the change in the poor little thing. But smiling, to hide his disturbance.

“Where are you off to, in such a hurry?” he asked, “I've been trying to catch you up for a long time.”

“I'm going home.”

“Still living up-town?”

“No; down in Washington Square.”

He couldn’t endure to let go of her hand, he couldn’t endure the thought of losing her; the tenderness and affection he had felt for her two years ago came back a hundredfold now. A tenderness that wrung his heart. To see her so shabby, so thin, so anxious, and still with her lovely, luminous grey eyes. . . .

“Can’t I walk with you part of the way?” he asked.

“I was going in the ‘L,’ ” she said, doubtfully.

“But you’re not in a hurry? . . . Have you had lunch?”

“Oh, I couldn’t!”

“Nonsense! Come on!”

She wavered; and he instantly took advantage of her irresolution by taking her arm.

“Please!” he said. “It’s Saturday, the one day I don’t have to hurry.”

And, so afraid was he of any silence between them, that he began to talk about nothing; about how he had come up to Tiffany’s from his office, to see about a watch he was having repaired. About how fine the weather was for March, and how lively Fifth Avenue looked, and so on, until they were outside the little restaurant he had decided upon.

"I can't, Mr. Landry! I look too—awful!"

"Rosaleen, you couldn't look awful. And if I don't mind, I don't believe anyone else will complain."

She followed him to a corner table and sat down, confused and embarrassed, opposite him. She was so conscious of her bare hands, her carelessly dressed hair. He ordered a substantial lunch, and then leaned across the table, to look at her.

"You're much thinner," he said. "Why? You don't look well!"

"I'm all right," she said. "How are you?"

"I'm not all right," he answered. "I've never been all right since I was fool enough to let you go."

"Oh, no!" she said, with a bitter little smile. "Don't pretend you've been thinking of me all the time. I know better!"

"No," he said, in his serious way. "I'm not saying I've thought of you all the time. What I mean is, that I realised long ago—that you were the—the right one—the only woman in the world for me. . . ."

She smiled again, but with tears in her eyes.

"Let's not be silly!" she said. "Let's just be good friends. . . ."

"No! . . . Look here, Rosaleen. . . . I wish I could tell you how I feel. . . . At first, I'll be

honest—At first I was angry. I felt that you hadn't been fair with me. . . . I thought I'd forget the whole thing. But I couldn't. I wrote to you, twice. And then when you didn't answer, I thought—it was over. It haunted me. I promise you, Rosaleen——”

She laid her hand very lightly on his arm.

“Please—let's not bring it all up again?” she said. “It *is* all over. . . . Tell me how you've been getting on. You look—splendid.”

And she really thought he did. He was well-dressed, he had a prosperous, an important air; he was no longer a boy, but a man, and a mighty self-confident man.

“I'm doing very well,” he said. “But I want to hear about you.”

“Oh! . . . I'm an artist!” she said, laughing. “A regular professional artist.”

“Are you? It doesn't seem to agree with you.”

“It isn't the work that disagrees with me; it's the not getting any work. I'm poor!”

“Do you support yourself? Don't you live with those Humberts any longer?”

She shook her head.

“No,” she said. “You see . . . I'm married.”

“Rosaleen!” he cried.

For a few moments he was silent, looking at her,

filled with an immense regret, a remorse that stifled him.

“Who?” he asked at last.

“An artist.”

“But—doesn’t the fellow support you? Doesn’t he—work?”

“He tries. But he’s nearly blind.”

“Good God! And you support him?”

“I do the best I can. Only I’ve been sick.”

“No!” he cried. “Rosaleen, this is horrible! What can I do to help you?”

“Don’t!” she said. “You’ll make me cry. . . . You—you make me so—so sorry for myself. . . .”

They couldn’t finish their lunch, either of them. Landry paid the check, and they rose. But as she was passing out in front of him, he stopped her.

“Rosaleen,” he said. “They have very good chocolates here. You used to like chocolates. Let me get you a box!”

But now she was crying, and he hastily turned with her into a quieter street.

“No cause for tears!” he said, cheerfully.

“I know it! . . . But I’m—I’m a fool. . . . I’m nervous, I guess. . . .”

“I’ll take you home.”

“No, I’d *rather* not, Mr. Landry!”

“Don’t you want to see me again?”

"Yes, I do. Any evening—this evening, if you like."

He wrote down the address.

"But I don't like to let you go like this!" he said.
"I don't think you're fit. Let me get you a taxi?"

"No, thanks, really I'm perfectly all right!"

She smiled at him to convince him. And with a long hand clasp they separated. He stood looking after her, with a pity almost beyond his endurance. So this is what she had come to! Shabby, hungry, running about looking for work to support a blind husband. He could see before him the kid in the sailor blouse, in Miss Waters' studio. . . .

The girl he ought to have married. He could have spared her all this. It was *his* fault, all of it his fault.

II

THEY were living in the same studio Rosaleen had once shared with Enid and Dodo. And when Landry opened the door, he was rather impressed. Perhaps he had unconsciously expected a garret and the blind man lying on a pallet. And instead saw a large and imposingly artistic room, very dark in the corners, but with a circle of light from a red-shaded lamp on a table in the centre and Rosaleen and her husband sitting beside it. The husband, too, was much better than he had expected; he was

really a very gentlemanly chap, and a good talker; nothing pitiful or destitute about him. One wouldn't have suspected him of being blind. An immense, fat fellow with a tremendous voice, and a somewhat broad sense of humour. He talked to Landry about the opera, for that was the only form of art with which the young man was acquainted. He had a very decent cigar to offer him, and he mixed an excellent cocktail.

Rosaleen, too, was different; she wore an embroidered smock of dark red silk and she had bronze slippers and stockings, and her fine brown hair was parted on one side and doubled under, to look like a short crop. Landry thought she looked quite as an artist's wife ought to look, and charming, and adorable. She had scarcely said a word all the evening; she had sat in silence while the two men talked, but he knew very well that she wasn't listening. She had an odd, preoccupied look in her eyes which he later came to know very well. . . .

It was a mild and somewhat flavourless evening. When the time came for him to go, the husband invited him to come to lunch the following Saturday, and he had said that he would.

He went home in a queer mood; he was, although he didn't know it, refusing to think at all, refusing to examine his impressions.

III

As he was walking over from the bus that next Saturday, he met her hurrying through Fourth Street, and he was really shocked at her appearance. Even an artist's wife ought to be a little more particular. She was hatless, with felt bedroom slippers on her feet, and her arms were filled with huge bundles from which protruded the feathery tops of carrots and celery leaves. The gay April breeze was blowing her soft untidy hair across her eyes, and at first she didn't recognise him.

"Oh, Mr. Landry!" she said. "Don't *look* at me! . . . You shouldn't come so early . . .!"

There was a very great change in her; a greater one than he had realised before. She was not only thinner and paler and older looking; she was different. That critical and childish look in her eyes had gone, that air of an observer; she was no longer looking on at life, she was *in* it, she was living.

He took one of the immense bags and followed her upstairs.

And the studio, too, was revealed to him in its reality; the artistic glamour of it was gone in the daylight. In fact, it wasn't a studio at all; there was, crowded into one corner, a small table on which Rosaleen's drawing materials were neatly laid out

on a blotter, but the other corners contained only sordid and common adjuncts to a poverty-stricken life; a cheap little bureau covered with a paltry lace scarf, a trunk masquerading as a table, a wooden egg crate in which were dozens of tins of tomatoes, bought at a sale. The distinguished artist himself was not what he had seemed; he was still handsome, still debonair, but he was wearing a dirty collar and a soiled white apron over a wrinkled suit. He was sitting beside a little gas stove on a table, on which was superimposed a portable oven with a glass door, and he was peering in with his extinguished eyes, so absorbed in his watching that he had to make a visible effort to arouse himself and to welcome Landry.

“*A la bonne heure!*” he said, cordially. “I’ve made something which no man with a soul could resist. It will be ready at one sharp. A Galette, to be eaten hot, with a sauce of wine and cream. That, coffee of the best, and a marvellous little salad. . . . Eh?”

Landry answered without great enthusiasm; he wasn’t much interested in food. And immediately the conversation languished, the animation fled from Lawrence’s face; he became again crumpled and dejected, until Rosaleen, who had been in the back room, returned and began asking him questions about

the *Galette*. That started him; he talked and talked, and his talk was all of food—about methods of preparation—a subject upon which Landry was profoundly ignorant. The meals in his home were plain and not greatly varied, meat, poultry and game roasted or broiled, the more respectable vegetables, an unobtrusive salad, innocent milky puddings, and those peculiar and delectable Southern hot breads. When he ate in a restaurant he ordered very much the same things, and when he was the guest of someone very rich who set rare dishes before him, he didn't quite know what he was eating and cared still less. Such an idea as stuffing an eggplant with chopped liver seemed to him fantastic and frivolous.

The lunch was undoubtedly a good one, but it was ruined by Lawrence's interminable culinary talk. There was no chance for a word with Rosaleen; she seemed to have no other idea in her head but to "draw out" her tiresome husband, to encourage him to bore their guest beyond toleration. Landry felt that this was hardly hospitable.

At last he rose.

"I'll have to be going," he said. "It's after three, and I have an engagement."

Lawrence shook his hand with tremendous cordiality.

“Come again!” he said. “Take pity on a man who has very little left in life. Come often!”

He turned toward Rosaleen, and Landry distinctly saw a look of understanding pass between them which he didn’t like.

“I’ll walk as far as the corner with you,” said Rosaleen. “I have an errand.”

And just as she was, she went out of the door with him. He stopped her at the head of the stairs.

“You shouldn’t go out in those slippers, Rosaleen! You’ll catch cold. . . .”

“But that’s just where I’m going!” she answered, laughing. “To the shoemaker’s to get my shoes. They’re being mended.”

“But—” he began, and stopped.

“But haven’t you more than one pair?” he had been about to say.

He couldn’t endure to see her running about the streets like this, hatless, in bedroom slippers, a neglected, pitiful creature who had lost her womanly pride.

All the circumstances of her life puzzled and displeased him. There was something about it he couldn’t comprehend—that fat fellow with his cooking, the strained gallantry of Rosaleen’s bearing, the subtly unpleasant atmosphere which surrounded

them. Even poverty couldn't account for it, he thought.

They had reached the corner, and Rosaleen stopped.

"Mr. Landry!" she said. "Could you lend me ten dollars?"

He pulled out his bill fold, handed her a bill, politely waved aside her thanks, and fled, hurrying from the sight of her. He felt really sick, with pity, with amazement, with an unconquerable disgust.

CHAPTER TWO

I

RIDICULOUS! He had said that he wanted to help Rosaleen, and now, as soon as he had a chance, he was horribly upset.

He sat down that very evening and wrote her a note.

“Dear Rosaleen:

“You must not be offended when I say that I have noticed that you are in straitened circumstances. I hope you look upon me, as I look upon you, as an old friend, and you must allow me the privilege of helping you. Do not hesitate to tell me at any time if you think I can be of use.

“Always faithfully your friend,

“Nicholas Landry.”

And he enclosed a cheque.

When he had addressed and sealed the letter, he sat back in his chair and contemplated his surroundings with a frown. He had been writing at a little desk in the corner of the library; there beside the table in the centre of the room sat his august and

benevolent aunt, in her discreet black dinner gown, embroidering. Through the open door he could see young Caroline in the next room sitting before the piano, hands idle in her lap, her face upturned to the young man standing beside her. . . . It hurt him intolerably. Now, when he would have been able to give to his wife—not a setting quite so luxurious as this, but at least peace, dignity, and comfort, he was compelled to see this beloved creature in degrading and sordid poverty.

He had done remarkably well. He had had a small legacy from an uncle. His sister had whimpered a little when he refused to spare her the price of one new dress from it, but she had soon been brought to approve his severity. He had known where to place his money; it had gone into a growing young firm of ship brokers, and himself with it, and he saw ahead of him just the future he had planned.

The financial future, that is. But not the home he had imagined. He was not a man easily attracted by women; in fact, he rather disliked them. He was not impressionable, not emotional; he was one of those absurd and incredible creatures capable of loving one woman all through life. And not through any conscious and pompous effort, either. He saw plainly that he would never want anyone

but Rosaleen, and he saw, too, with equal plainness, that he could not have her. The idea of intriguing to win her from her husband never entered his head. He would not even say to himself that he loved her; he simply said that he regretted her, bitterly, profoundly. His point of view was either honourable or sentimental, whichever way you choose to see it, but it was sincere. He didn't deceive himself; but he saw not the faintest danger of any catastrophe. He knew he could trust himself to go on seeing Rosaleen, just as he knew he could trust her. He was not at all afraid of this woman who borrowed money from him. Instead, he said to himself—

“Thank God I’ve got something to give her!”

II

No answer came to his letter; in fact, it was never answered and never mentioned by either of them. The cheque dropped into that bottomless pit which was their household exchequer.

A week later he decided to stroll down to the Square, and perhaps to visit Rosaleen. . . . It was a wonderful Spring evening, filled with that cruel promise, that hope never defined, never fulfilled, that wayward melancholy that is the spirit of every

such hour. It touched Landry profoundly; the cries of the children at play sounded plaintive in his ears; he even saw a futile pathos in the street lights that glowed so blatantly against a sky not yet entirely darkened. There was a faint breeze blowing, and in the little park the swelling branches of the bare young trees swayed mildly.

He went upstairs, to find the studio door open and a party going on, the room crowded and turbulent. Lawrence recognised him at once, and welcomed him with delight.

“Just in time!” he cried. “Put your hat and stick in the back room and come in and get a drink!”

Still aloof and enchanted by the Spring night, Landry somewhat reluctantly obeyed, and pushing aside the curtain, entered that private apartment into which he had observed Rosaleen disappearing from time to time. A horrible little black hole with nothing in it but a wide bed with sagging springs that nearly touched the floor, and, all round the walls, hooks upon which hung the motley clothes of the household. Nothing else; no rug on the floor, nor a chair; evidently all the rest of their earthly possessions had gone into the big studio.

He laid his hat and stick on the ragged white counterpane, and returned to the party. The key to the situation was not in his hands; he saw none

of the pathos of it; he saw merely a crowd of noisy and vulgar people who were drinking too much, making too much of a row, dancing with abandon to the music of a wretched phonograph. Rosaleen hurried about, an anxious hostess, changing records, filling glasses, talking to this one and that; now and then she danced, but perfunctorily. No one paid much attention to her. She wore the same dark red silk smock and bronze slippers she had worn on the evening of his first visit, but by the garish light of four gas jets, he could see now how worn and shabby this finery was.

But there was a great deal which he could not see. He could not see the frightful fear of solitude in Lawrence's heart which made him welcome this riff-raff, these people who could be raked in at an hour's notice, lured by whiskey, by the perfect freedom allowed them. None of his old friends came any more, or Rosaleen's. They had lost their footing, and they knew it well. But Lawrence didn't care, so long as there was noise and life about him, so long as he was not alone. And Rosaleen, in her unbounded pity for him, would have watched devils dancing there with joy if it had given him comfort.

Landry was completely out of his element. He was really miserable. The punch was not good, the floor was sticky, the girls were hectic and peculiar;

he was very anxious to get away, but without offending Rosaleen. He saw her hurry into the back room and, as he was standing near the curtains, it was easy to slip in after her, unnoticed.

"Rosaleen," he began, but stopped in surprise. "Why are you putting on your hat?"

"I'm going out," she said.

"It's nearly eleven. Where are you going?"

"Oh! . . . To the delicatessen!" she cried, with the first trace of irritability he had yet seen in her.

"Now?"

"Yes, now!" she cried, and he was amazed to see tears in her eyes. "Why do you *bother* me so? Let me alone!"

"I don't want to bother you, Rosaleen," he said. "But—if you're going alone, let me come."

"No," she said. "You can't. They'd all notice."

"Let them! You surely don't care for the opinion of that crew! And anyway, they'll think I've gone home."

She had got her hat on now.

"Come on, then!" she said, and led him through a door hidden by hanging coats and wraps, into the hall.

She went furiously fast, and they didn't exchange a word all the way to Sixth Avenue. She entered a brilliantly lighted shop with a white tiled floor and

advanced to the high glass counter. And began ordering the most amazing list—soap, bread, pickles, salad, cake, bacon. It made a huge bundle. Landry tried to take it from her.

“No!” she said. “You said you were going home!”

“I’ll take you to the door first. Rosaleen, give me that package and don’t be so disagreeable! What’s the trouble?”

“I’m *tired!*” she said. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to be nasty, Mr. Landry!”

She let him take the bundle, and they began to retrace their steps.

“You *are* an extraordinary girl!” he said. “I can’t understand you. Do you always do your marketing a little before midnight?”

“I do it when I can!” she answered, with a sigh. “When I can get the money for it.”

“But—” he began, but stopped short. Had she got the money at that party? And from whom?

III

HE couldn’t help talking about it. He began at breakfast the next morning, to his aunt.

“I’ve come across a very sad case,” he said. “Girl I used to know some time ago. And now she’s

married to an artist—rather prominent in the past, but now he's going blind. And they're as poor as possible. What can you do to help, in a case like that?"

Mrs. Allanby reflected.

"Aren't there societies, dear, to help needy artists?"

"They don't want charity!" he said, with his quick frown.

"What *do* they want?"

He regretted having brought up the subject now. But his aunt could not be stopped.

"Can't the wife do something to help? Perhaps Ah could get someone interested in the case. If you'll give me the name and address, Nick. . . ."

"No! That's not what I meant. I wanted you to think of some way that *I* could do something for them."

"I don't suppose they'd care where the help came from, dear boy. . . ."

"But *I* would!" he said, angrily.

"*You* would?" she said, and then was silent, with a tact a shade too obvious. He was heartily sorry he had ever mentioned the thing.

His food seemed to choke him, when he thought of Rosaleen in want. He felt gross, decadent, pampered, when he thought of her running through

the streets in her slippers, carrying immense packages. He began, ridiculously, to deprive himself of things. It somehow gave him consolation to make himself less comfortable.

He wrote to her again, and enclosed a larger cheque. (He the prudent, the practical!)

“Dear Rosaleen:

“You must let me help you. If you won’t think of yourself, think of others. You will wear yourself out, living like this. Tell me how I can be of service.”

This letter, too, was never answered, and when four days had gone by, he decided to go down there and see for himself how things were going. It was a bright, quiet Sunday and he had contemplated asking her to go for a walk, so that they could have a serious talk. But he found Lawrence sitting alone in the studio.

“Rosaleen’s gone out,” he said. “I’m alone, and you can’t imagine how I dislike being alone. Sit down and talk to me, won’t you? Of course I quite realise that I’m not the magnet, and so on, but nevertheless . . . Eh?”

In common decency, Nick was obliged to comply. “Do you know,” Lawrence went on, “one of the

worst things about this thing is the monstrous jealousy it brings out. I'm jealous of Rosaleen. Not as a husband, you understand; I'm not capable of that. I've never been able to understand it. Why distress oneself so inordinately for the frail creatures? Why not expect the worst? No, I'm jealous of her because she can see and I can't. And she doesn't need to see. . . . I hate her for it, sometimes. . . . Good God! . . . I'm growing worse and worse. Everything is hazy now, as if there were a film over my eyes. It—maddens me. I'm always trying to brush it away. . . .”

He groaned, and drew his hand across his forehead.

“Let me grumble, young man!” he said. “Try to listen to me with a little human compassion. Try to think what it means—not to *see*.”

“Yes,” said Landry. “I knew two or three chaps in the army . . .”

“Oh, asses! Young, healthy lustful animals, filled with their illusion that they've saved the world with their blindness. But *me*! What comfort have I? Landry, if I were God Himself, I couldn't invent anything more exquisitely hideous than that—to make an *artist* blind! An artist, who lives—who feeds himself on colour, whose ecstasy is in a line,

whose heart and soul are only to be reached through his eyes. . . . What an idea, eh?"

"Yes," said Landry. "It must be pretty bad."

But still he couldn't help feeling more sorry for those young chaps he had known, blinded in the war, who had had to renounce all the pleasant ways of life. A fellow like Lawrence, with a brain, a fellow who could *talk*, didn't, somehow, seem as pitiful to him as those inarticulate, suffering boys. Lawrence was queer, he was eccentric, and he no doubt had queer and eccentric consolations unknown to those others. He sympathised with Lawrence; certainly. But his mind strayed to Rosaleen.

Where had she gone? And with whom? He thought about it with growing uneasiness. At last he took the bull by the horns.

"Where has Rosaleen gone?" he asked, in a tone as Bohemian and casual as he could make it.

"With a new man," said Lawrence. "A gentlemanly illustrator. Ah, well! . . . What can one expect?"

Just as Lawrence was beginning one of his terrible dissertations on cooking, there was a knock at the door, and a curly haired young man entered. He asked for Rosaleen without ceremony.

"Out with Brindell, taking a walk," said Lawrence. "Sit down, Matthews, and have a drink!"

His manner was a curious blend of contempt and a terribly anxious hospitality. He despised these two young men, but he wished above all things to keep them there to talk to. Ambrose Matthews was a little more to his liking than Landry; he was able to see his point of view, and to discuss in all its subtle intricacies the anguish of the unfortunate artist. This never failed to astound Landry. He didn't see what possible comfort it could be to Lawrence to dissect his sufferings, to describe so vividly as to re-live his most horrible moments.

"I should think you'd rather try to forget it," he observed, rather bluntly.

Ambrose Matthews explained.

"My dear fellow, that's the worst possible course. To repress, to conceal, and all that sort of thing. . . . What we need is to drag everything out into the sunlight. There the weeds will perish and the hardy plants thrive."

"Sunlight doesn't kill weeds," said Lawrence. "I don't talk for the benefit of my psyche, or my subconscious self, or my soul; I talk because it interests me."

Landry got up.

"I'll have to be getting along!" he said. "Will you tell Rosaleen I'm sorry I missed her? . . . Is there anything I can do for you before I go?"

"You might run in next door and get me a package of cigarettes," said Lawrence. "I've begun to smoke."

Resentful and sulky, Landry did this, and when he returned with them, he found Ambrose Matthews waiting for him.

"I'll walk a part of the way with you," he said, and, as was his habit, took his companion's arm.

"You haven't seen Rosaleen's latest, have you?" he asked.

"Latest what?" demanded Landry, stiffly.

"Latest—I don't know what to call us. Latest One to Be Borrowed From. He's the fifth, to my knowledge. And why do we do it? She's not even grateful. It's an interesting case."

Landry withdrew his arm, under the pretext of lighting a cigarette.

"Not so interesting for *her*," he said. "Poor girl!"

"It's a sort of perverted sex instinct," said Ambrose. "Her training has been so repressive that she's afraid to accept love, so she substitutes money—"

"Rot!" said Landry, violently. "It's nothing but an 'instinct' to get something to eat for herself and her husband."

Then Ambrose said that it was perhaps a perverted maternal instinct.

"She ought to have had children," he said. "As it is, she lavishes on him the maternal love she would have given to them."

"She's not perverted at all," said Landry. "What you choose to call perverted is what *I* call—good."

IV

But it worried him frightfully. He made up his mind to remonstrate with Rosaleen, and he wrote her another note.

"Will you meet me at the Ritz at four to-morrow? I want to talk to you alone for a few minutes, please."

At breakfast the next morning came her answer.

"Dear Mr. Landry: Please don't ask me to do that. I never do. You can always see me here whenever you like.

R. I."

This astonished him. He hadn't expected any objection. He felt suddenly desolate and unhappy;

he felt that he was not Rosaleen's own particular friend, who could be permitted all privileges; she was treating him as she would any man; he was simply one of a crowd. . . .

But he went, that same evening. The studio was crowded with people, most of whom he had seen there before. But there was one man whom he did not know, but whom he knew must be the gentlemanly illustrator. A well-dressed, nice-looking young chap, with a silent air of observing, not too favourably, all that went on before him. And his eyes followed Rosaleen all the time, and for her and her only he had a quick and subtle smile.

A feeling which he refused to recognise took possession of Landry, a rage that shook the very foundation of his self-control. He went over to the corner where they stood talking.

“You promised to talk to me alone!” he said, with a manner he had never used before in his life—an outrageous insolence. “Come out and walk round the park, will you?”

Brindell looked at him, at first astonished, and then very angry.

“Who the devil is *this*?” he asked, turning to Rosaleen.

“An old, old friend,” said Rosaleen, hastily. “Ex-

cuse me, please, Mr. Brindell, just for a few minutes?"

"Come on! Put on your hat and coat!" said Landry.

Rosaleen shook her head.

"No; we can talk in here," she said, and led him into the back room. "Mr. Landry, what made you so rude?"

"Do you borrow money from that—popinjay?" he demanded.

He was glad to see the shocked colour that rose in her thin face; he wanted and intended to be outrageous.

"You—haven't any right to talk like that!" she cried. "I—"

"I have. I've lent you money. You're under obligations to me. . . . I *won't have* you doing this! Haven't you any pride? Any self-respect?"

"Hush! Don't talk so loud! . . . Oh, Mr. Landry, how *can* you!"

"Haven't you any decency?" he went on, furiously. "You're common talk, you and your 'friends.' I'm ashamed of you!"

"Mr. Landry!" she cried, amazed. "What's the matter with you?"

"I'm disgusted!" he said. "I'm . . ."

He looked at her, standing before him, the

harassed and solitary creature who had endured so much, who suffered such indignities without being overwhelmed. There she was, in her mountebank costume, her red smock, her bronze slippers, with her pale and anxious face. . . . He thought of the complexity, the mystery of these dealings she had had with men, and he hated her.

“I’m through with you!” he said.

He pulled down his hat from the hook where he always left it, and opened the door into the hall.

“No! . . . Mr. Landry!” she whispered, clutching at his coat. “Don’t! Please don’t go like this!”

But he looked at her with a glance so scornful and full of loathing that she dropped her hands hastily.

But before he had got to the street door, she came running down the stairs after him; he heard the clop-clop of her slippers, which were too large and left her foot at every step.

“Mr. Landry!” she cried. “Please! . . . I don’t want you to misjudge me . . . I thought you would understand!”

“I don’t!” he said, briefly.

“But what else can I do? How can we live?”

“Does your husband know that you do—this?”

“Of course!” she cried, astonished. “He’s the one who—he asks me to.”

They were standing outside the door of what had

been Lawrence's old studio; the hall was entirely dark; he couldn't see her at all. That made her voice seem quite different; it reached him a disembodied sound, miraculously sad.

"I never meant to tell anyone," she said. "But now I'd like to tell you. It's wrong. It's weak. I ought just to do what I think right and not care if I *am* misunderstood. But I can't."

She was still a moment.

"Let's go into the tea room downstairs. Miss Gosorkus is upstairs and I don't think there'll be anyone there."

CHAPTER THREE

I

THEY sat there for hours, at a tiny table, in a corner of the dimly lighted shop, crowded with miscellaneous objects, embroidered smocks, brass candlesticks, pictures, books, curios, baskets. The red curtains were drawn across the windows, the door was closed; they were undisturbed, isolated during the course of that most pathetic of human struggles—that forever unsuccessful effort of one soul to explain itself to another. With utter earnestness, sincerity, with justice and compassion for Lawrence, Rosaleen tried to give Landry the story of her marriage. She had only one motive—that this man should not think her worse than she was. She felt that if he could be brought to see *why* she had done this and that, he would no longer blame her. She wished to make him see how inevitable it had all been.

She began with the day that Lawrence had come to her room to kill himself. She and Miss Waters had tended him with frightened assiduity all the afternoon, but in vain. His malady was beyond their reach. His malady was despair. He had been

through an experience that day which had wrecked his soul. The doctor had told him that he was going blind, and that nothing could prevent it.

Terror had seized him. He had thought at once of the only person he knew who was capable of sustained and disinterested kindness, and he had fled to Rosaleen, to die in her compassionate presence. His attempt, however, wasn't successful, whether from lack of knowledge or from reluctance even he himself never knew. He hadn't really harmed himself at all; the blood-letting seemed in fact to make him feel better, to clear his brain. He could perfectly well have got up and walked off at any moment, but he preferred to lie with closed eyes, savouring his anguish. And permitting an exquisite sense of consolation to creep into his soul.

Rosaleen and Miss Waters worked desperately over him; they washed his face with cold water again and again. They made tea for him, and toast, and the smell of the toast revived him. He ate it, mournfully, still with his eyes closed. They bathed his forehead with Rosaleen's cherished "Florida water." Once Miss Waters laid her cottony-white head on his chest, to listen to his heart, but being too modest to unbutton his waistcoat, she didn't obtain much information. However, she knew it was the thing to do, and it impressed Rosaleen.

He lay there for two days; a most embarrassing situation. Miss Waters came to stop with Rosaleen, and they slept on the floor of the studio, because Rosaleen said it might make him think he was causing trouble if they pulled the other cot out of the room where he lay. The thought of causing trouble, however, was not one of Lawrence's worries. He would wake up in the night and groan, so horribly that Rosaleen and Miss Waters would cling to each other and weep. He asked for wines and delicacies which they could ill afford. But his selfishness made him all the more appealing to Rosaleen.

On the third day, late in the afternoon, he got up, bathed, shaved, and dressed. Rosaleen disposed him in the wing chair, and went to the corner to fetch cigarettes for him.

"What would you like for dinner?" she asked.

He said he didn't care; anything nice. . . .

"Won't you take something now?" she entreated.
"A nice hot cup of cocoa?"

"No; not cocoa."

He sighed and once more closed his eyes, which frightened Rosaleen.

"What *can* I do for you?" she asked.

"Stay near me!" he said. "Don't leave me alone!"

“Of course I won’t!” she answered.

He stayed there in the studio for nearly three weeks, sitting about in his dressing gown, smoking and reading. One day he ordered a taxi and sent Rosaleen to the flat where he had been living, to fetch him a long list of things, including his painting materials, and when she returned, he set up his easel and began to work.

“I may have six months more, you know,” he said. “I can see almost as well as ever now. The colours aren’t quite so clear, perhaps. . . .”

Rosaleen was delighted to see him taking an interest in something; she had for so long looked upon him as an invalid, almost unable to move, for whose recovery she was more or less responsible. She felt that this new interest in his work might serve to rouse him from that apathy which so distressed and alarmed her. She sat watching him, with affection, with admiration. He was singing to himself, in a deep, growling basso, and working just as she had seen him working in his studio downstairs. . . . When suddenly he flung down the brushes and fell on his knees, so heavily that the room shook.

“Oh, my God!” he cried. “I can’t bear it! I can’t live! . . . It’s going from me! . . . Oh, let me die! Let me die . . . !”

She had rushed across the room and was on her knees beside him.

“Lawrence!” she cried. “Dear Lawrence! Don’t give way! Don’t take it so hard! They say that bl—that people who can’t see are very happy. You’ll find other things—all *sorts* of other things—to interest you!”

“Be quiet!” he cried, sternly. “Don’t dare to tell me such things!

He rose heavily to his feet and went over to the window.

“If it had come at once!” he said. “If everything had been blotted out at one stroke, I could have endured it. . . . But to see it coming on, to know what’s going to happen. . . . No!” he cried, suddenly. “I *won’t* stand it! I *won’t* try!”

For weeks Rosaleen had no other thought but to try to comfort him. She was glad to use what remained of her five hundred dollars to buy him the things he wanted. His tastes were luxurious, above all, in matters of eating and drinking; he liked quail or sweetbreads for breakfast, and for dinner exotic things of which she had never heard before. And he wished a glass of good white port every day with his lunch. And what he asked for she got, if it were in any way possible.

II

SHE made no attempt to explain to Landry her reasons for marrying Lawrence. It had been with her purely a spiritual matter, a valiant effort at consoling him. The material aspects of the thing didn't trouble her; she didn't even regard it as a sacrifice. She knew that she didn't love him as she had loved Nick Landry; she had felt for him only that kindly affection she was ready to feel for any human creature. But she believed that in marrying him she would be doing something worthy, something of use; that she would be serving God.

Lawrence didn't know this; he honestly believed that Lawrence Iverson, even if he were blind and penniless, was a brilliant match for Rosaleen.

They were married at City Hall, with no friend present except Miss Waters, who wept all the time, and they went back to the studio, to take up their joint life there without any sort of festivity, any celebration. Lawrence had said that he could not stand it, that he was in no mood for that sort of thing; but as a matter of fact, he was ashamed of Rosaleen. He would have been proud to be her lover, but he was ashamed to be her husband. He didn't mention that he was married to anyone; there were no announcements sent out, no notice in the

paper. No one sent a present, except Miss Waters; no one came to call upon Rosaleen.

Lawrence had been just emerging from Bohemianism to the respectability of success. He had lived with order and comfort; he had been invited about, flattered, more or less "lionized." But he was not yet really established; he had no solid footing in that upper world, that "society" he so worshipped. He had no prestige to give Rosaleen, even if he had wished to do so. As a matter of fact, he carefully concealed the fact of his marriage from all these people.

The first invitation he got after the wedding was to a tea.

"You haven't got anything suitable to wear," he told her. "I'll have to go alone."

After establishing this precedent, he found it quite easy. He never suggested her accompanying him.

He was still fairly nice to Rosaleen in those days, although he was beginning to grow exasperated with her. She insisted upon being always his servant; never his friend, his comrade. She was always constrained; she never talked freely about what interested her; instead she was forever anxious to hearten and encourage Lawrence, to "draw him out"; she pretended to be interested in what interested him. He knew that she was prepared to endure

everything, to forgive everything, out of compassion, and it was intolerable. He could never reach her; he could never make any sort of impression upon her; the coarsest talk made no stain on her heart, no evil knowledge could disturb her; she was incorruptible, by reason of her divine stupidity.

His gentleness vanished; he allowed himself to be as irritable as he pleased. He could still see well enough, but he had been forbidden to use his eyes, and he was like a caged animal. He used to walk up and down the studio, groaning.

“How are we going to live?” he demanded, one day.

“I think I can get work,” said Rosaleen, promptly, “if you won’t mind being left alone part of the time?”

“Do it then! Do it!” he cried.

She tried, she tried faithfully, but her work was no longer good. She was too anxious to please. A blight had settled on her, her fancy was destroyed, her developing facility with her pencil was checked, and she had not had sufficient experience to go on without thought or effort, like a machine. She made next to nothing; and the day came, inevitably, when there was no money left. Lawrence had come home from somewhere in a taxi, and there hadn’t been

enough in his pocket to pay the tariff. He had come upstairs to ask Rosaleen for three dollars.

She had handed him a five dollar bill.

"It's all I have," she said. "All I have to buy dinner with. . . ."

"*What!*?" he bellowed. "No more? What do you do with what you earn? Eh?"

"I don't earn very much, Lawrence. And I use it to pay for things——"

He went down and paid the chauffeur. Then he re-entered the room and went over to the table where she was working. He snatched up the card she had been painting—three fat robins on a telephone wire, with nine gold bells underneath bearing the letters of **MERRY XMAS**.

"Painting?" he said. "*This is painting*, eh? Good God! . . . *This* going on in the room with *me*! . . . Rosaleen, you are no longer an artist. It's too blasphemous!"

He picked up her four cherished camel's hair brushes and snapped them into bits; then he tore up her cards and took up all the debris he had made, together with her paint box and her blocks of paper, and threw it all out of the window.

"Finished!" he said. "Go back to your pots and pans, wench, and leave such matters to your betters!"

III

IT had seemed to her sometimes that he was not a human being at all. She was not able to tell what was buffoonery and what was real. If there were anything real in him. . . . It filled her with despair; she wondered if she had really done him any good. And when she doubted that, there was no foundation left for her life. If it hadn't helped him, then all her misery was in vain, the terrible years which stretched before her would be filled with a pain quite useless, quite barren.

Her health began to fail. The irregular life, the fantastic meals Lawrence insisted upon, the noisy parties which kept her up night after night until almost dawn, the unceasing anxiety and unhappiness were too much for her. She did her very best; she was kind, patient, and loyal; she struggled to stifle her dreadful regrets, her disillusionment, she clung desperately to the one belief that kept her from absolute despair, the belief that she was indispensable, that Lawrence needed her and could not do without her.

He had singularly few friends. He knew almost every artist of reputation, but casually. He had been engrossed in his desire to enter society, and he hadn't troubled much with his colleagues. His chief

object in "entering society" had been to find a rich wife; and although he knew that any such thing would now have been impossible, still he blamed Rosaleen in his heart.

At last he had started this infernal "borrowing." And Rosaleen had consented. It outraged her pride, her self-respect, her dignity; but it didn't seem *wicked* to her. She thought that perhaps it was her duty to sacrifice this pride and self-respect for the sake of her husband. One man after the other. . . .

Landry interrupted her.

"Didn't they ever make love to you?" he asked, brutally. "Didn't they expect anything in return? Or were they all fools—like me?"

"I hardly *know!*" she said. wearily. "I never bothered. . . . I only had to get money. . . ."

"Which you knew you couldn't repay. That didn't bother you either, did it?"

"Yes, it did! But I always hoped and hoped that some day I could, in some way. Mr. Landry, what was I to *do?*?"

"There are women who'd rather die than be dis-honourable."

Her pale face flushed again.

"I wouldn't have done it for myself," she said. "I wouldn't have thought of such a thing. . . . But I *couldn't* let Lawrence want!"

Landry stood up.

"Listen to me, Rosaleen!" he said. "There's just one hope for you. Either you leave this demoralising, degrading atmosphere at once—or——"

"Or what?" she asked, with interest.

"Or else I'm done with you."

She shook her head sadly.

"No," she said. "It's no use talking like that. I shouldn't dream of leaving him, ever. I only wanted you to understand. I couldn't bear for you not to. But I see that you don't. Do you, Mr. Landry?"

"I don't know!" he said, miserably.

They were silent for a very long time. The ceiling shook from the dancing feet in the studio overhead, but no sound reached them. They were completely isolated in there, behind the drawn red curtains. At last Rosaleen looked up.

"Anyway," she said. "I think the best thing is—not to see each other any more."

She waited.

"Don't *you*?" she asked.

He regarded her, the unhappy wife, the victim of so many peoples' selfishness, and it suddenly occurred to him that after all, she wasn't much more than a young girl. Only twenty-four. . . . The thought startled him. She was so young, so friend-

less, and yet so strong. She hadn't gone under, she was not destroyed. What did that wretched "borrowing" amount to anyway? How had he dared reproach her with it? . . . He felt as if he could never take his eyes from that worn face, with its beautiful honesty and benevolence. After all, there must be some force in her forlorn youth that was greater than intellect, more irresistible than beauty, something indestructible, beyond his comprehension. . . .

He turned away, dazzled by his vision.

"Yes," he said. "It *is* best!"

CHAPTER FOUR

I

ROSALEEN went upstairs to the studio, where the party was still going on. It didn't seem possible; she felt as if days had gone by, almost as if she were a ghost coming back from another world. Nothing had happened, and yet everything had changed. Still the same row, the same love-making, the same hectic gaiety. Apparently no one had noticed her hours' absence; she didn't count, anyway, except to Mr. Brindell, and he had long ago gone home.

She went on with her superfluous hospitality. She was neither sleepy nor tired, nor was she in any way annoyed by the prolongation of the party. She was willing to continue indefinitely, winding up the phonograph, filling glasses, now and then dancing with a solitary man; she was in a waking dream, completely indifferent to the real world about her.

II

LAWRENCE was sleeping soundly. Very cautiously Rosaleen got up and barefooted made her

way across the dusty floor of the studio to a chair near the window.

It was very early, not yet five o'clock; before her lay the Square, lonely and calm under a pallid sky across which filmy white clouds went flying. She could see, faintly, the strong white arch and beyond it the long, misty avenue, where the rows and rows of lights still gleamed. Her mind was working rapidly and futilely, spinning like a wheel in a void. She saw everything, observed everything, with remarkable vividness. She heard two men's voices come suddenly out of the early morning quiet, talking loudly in Italian, they began abruptly, from nowhere, with a ringing sound of footsteps; they disappeared as abruptly and left the square as quiet as before.

Yes; of course! It was Nick Landry she wanted to think about, that dear boy with his quiet laugh that was balm to her soul after the sneers, the guffaws, the hysterical shrieks she was obliged to hear every day. Nick with his fastidious ways, his reserve so like her own, with his divine youth. . . . She recalled with a smile his lean, dark face, his quick frown, his voice, his gestures. She allowed herself to dwell upon him, to think of him with undisguised tenderness and pain, because it was her farewell to him. He was like herself. He would

not come any more. He was like herself; they would not meet again; he felt as she did, about this, and about all other things. The *difference* between him and all these others with their Right to Love, their Right to Happiness, their Right to One's Own Life! Both Nick and herself considered above all the Right of Other People to exist unmolested—Lawrence's Rights, for instance. . . .

Lawrence had shouted with laughter over those cheques from Nick. He had called him a sentimentalist. He said, and Ambrose Matthews said, and Enid said, and so many of the others said, that sentimentality was the curse of the world; that muddle-headed, unreasoning sentimentality was what ruined people's lives. That the thing to be desired, the great panacea, was clear-sightedness, was enlightened self-interest. And yet Lawrence existed through her sentimentality and that of the good-humoured fellows who had lent their money. It was sentimentality which had caused Nick to help them, which now caused them to part. . . .

Rosaleen observed that this fiercely scorned and detested sentimentality very often caused people to act with the greatest nobility. While common-sense and enlightened self-interest seemed frequently to bring forth incredible baseness.

She thought of things quite new to her; she saw

life in a new, a larger way. She saw the desolate and bitter goal toward which her road led; and she was ready to set out on that road. It was the high moment of her life. It was the great triumph of her spirit, so horribly wounded, so valiant.

• • • • •

She was startled by the harsh voice of Lawrence, and turning she saw him standing in the doorway of the back room, in his dressing gown.

“What the devil are you doing?” he asked. “Why did you get up at this time? It’s just struck five.”

“Nothing,” said Rosaleen. “Just—thinking. I couldn’t get to sleep again. I thought I’d like to sit by the window and get some air. . . .”

He laughed.

“I see!” he said. “Well, it’s as good a time as any other for a little chat—a little explanation.”

He groped his way in and sat down.

“Now, then!” he said. “Suppose you tell me where you went with that fellow last evening, eh?”

She was startled. She hadn’t thought he had noticed. He had said nothing, even when all the people had gone and they were alone together.

“Oh . . . Just downstairs to the tea room!”

“And why?”

“Oh . . . to talk quietly!”

“To borrow money?”

“No.”

“Why not? We have nothing in the house.
Why didn’t you borrow?”

“I—didn’t want to.”

“Why not? Has the worm turned?”

“I didn’t ask him.”

“Just philandering, eh? Noble, high-minded philandering? A few tears and so on, for him to pity you? So that he’ll pay without being asked? Hypocrite! Coward! Oh, you cheap, cheap worthless little coward!”

“Lawrence!” she said. “Don’t be so unkind!”

“You’re not unkind, are you? Eh? You try to make a fool of me in the most charitable possible way. Eh? It doesn’t touch my heart, fair Rosaleen, because I don’t care a fig for you, but I have still a vestige of pride left. Enough to *curse* you!” he ended, with sudden ferocity.

“Lawrence! You musn’t say that! You know I don’t make a—You know that I’m—loyal to you, always.”

“You lie. You sit there and tell that puppy how badly I treat you. He thinks you’re a martyr and I’m a bully. I’ve seen it this long time. The next time you see him you’ll recount *this* scene, eh?”

“He’s gone. I’m not going to see him again.”

He laughed again.

"Gone, eh? Why? He got sick of you, I suppose. Who wouldn't?"

"He *didn't* get sick of me!" said Rosaleen, quietly, but with a quivering lip.

"Ah! . . . Of course not! . . . He thought it was his duty to go? That's the way those good little boys get themselves out of an awkward situation."

"No!" said Rosaleen. "I—wanted him to go."

"But it wasn't *very* hard to get rid of him, was it?"

"Yes! Yes! It was!" she cried.

"Then why did you do it, may I ask? His money was extremely useful."

"Lawrence!" she cried, in a sort of despair. "Don't you realise that all people aren't—like that? Don't you know that there are some *good* people?"

"You mean yourself, I take it. You want me to realise how much better you are than me? Is that the idea?"

"No," she said. "I didn't mean myself. I meant him . . . Mr. Landry. There *are*—good people. *He* is good."

"Do you love him?"

She was amazed and shocked.

"Do you?" he asked again.

She thought for a moment, and then she said, "No!" For it was not the love Lawrence meant.

"Do you love *me*?"

"I—I don't know, Lawrence. . . ."

"Then why, may I ask, do you stay with me?"

"I—because I—want to do what is right. I want to be—loyal. . . . I want to—to help you."

"You don't. You're not really any use at all. You're so slow and thick-witted. You can't even make a living. You borrow money for me, it is true, but that's not so hard. I could do that better alone. I've only endured you out of pity, because if I turned you out, you'd starve to death—or, as they say in the books—you would meet with 'worse than death.' You've no character."

"You're going too far!" she cried. "I can't stand everything!"

"Oh, yes, you can! Instead of pride, you've got your sanctimonious self-satisfaction. You cry instead of hitting back."

She clenched her hands and stood, with blazing cheeks, and passionately beating heart, fighting to keep silent.

"I *won't* hurt him!" she told herself. "He's blind and lonely. No matter what he says, I'll remember that I'm all he has in the world, and that he needs me. I *won't* say anything that will hurt him!"

"What are you doing now?" he asked. "Praying? That's right. Pray for a pure heart and then ask for a little money, while you're about it."

There was a long pause.

"Well," she said cheerfully, at last. "Let's not quarrel, Lawrence! Shall we have breakfast?"

"A little less of the martyr, if you don't mind. I suppose it's as refreshing as a Turkish bath, isn't it, to feel that you've given up all for duty?"

"But I don't like it!" he cried, suddenly, in a voice that startled her. "Your renunciations and your nobilities and your resignations, and all the rest of your bag of tricks, nauseate me. I don't really believe I can stand you any more."

He lumbered over to the window and threw it open. Rosaleen flung herself upon him in terror, imagining that he was going to throw himself out. But he pushed her away violently.

"Taxi!" he bawled, in a voice that reverberated through the street. "Taxi!"

The horrible, bellowing voice filled Rosaleen with panic fear.

"Please, *please* don't!" she entreated. "Please, please, please don't! Lawrence! I'll telephone for a cab! Oh, *please* do come in!"

But he bawled again.

"Taxi!"

And a voice below answered him.

“Hey! Keep calm! Here y’are!”

“Wait!” said Lawrence, and drew himself into the room again.

“Lawrence, what are you going to do!” she cried.

“Get dressed!” he said, “and be quick about it!”

She began to put on her clothes with cold and trembling hands. By the time she had finished, he was quite dressed and fumbling at the familiar hook for his overcoat and hat. Then he pulled down Rosaleen’s jacket.

“Here!” he said. “Put this on!”

“Oh, Lawrence!” she cried. “What——”

He lurched over to her and flung the jacket round her shoulders, and grasped her fiercely by the arm.

“Come on!” he said, with a laugh.

“Where?” she cried, but he did not answer.

He shut her into the cab, and spoke in a low tone to the driver; then he climbed in beside her, and they started off.

“Lawrence!” she entreated. “Don’t do anything you’ll be sorry for! Please, Lawrence, tell me where we’re going!”

But he never said a word. He lighted a cigar and leaned back, smoking, with a smile on his face.

She shook him frantically, she implored him; a

great terror had taken possession of her. She tried to open the door and jump out; she didn't care if she were killed, so long as she could escape from this horribly smiling man. But he pulled her back with an oath.

They went on and on; she didn't notice where. At last they stopped before a house and Lawrence got out, pulling her after him; he stumbled up the steps and rang the bell. He stood there waiting, still grasping Rosaleen by the arm, hatless, shivering in the cold mist. At last the door was opened by a servant.

"Here's a lady to see Mr. Landry!" cried Lawrence, and with a push he sent Rosaleen stumbling inside. Then——

"I give you back your sacrifice!" he called, with a laugh, and was gone, slamming the door behind him. She could hear him shouting with laughter all the way down the steps.

III

ROSALEEN stood where she had fallen against the hat rack, while the maid stared at her. She couldn't speak or move; it came across her mind that perhaps she was dying. . . .

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"You better sit down!" said the girl, moved by compassion. "You look sick!"

Rosaleen sank into a carved chair with an enormously high back; and the maid, on her way upstairs to fetch Mr. Landry, looked back and saw her there, erect, her feet modestly crossed, her trembling hands resting on the arms.

But when Nick came rushing down, she had gone.

BOOK FOUR: THE HONOURABLE LOVERS

CHAPTER ONE

I

AN afternoon of unparalleled gloominess. It had been dark all the day long, and now toward evening a savage rain had come on, driven by a cold March wind. In his rain-coat and waterproofed boots he could in a way defy the storm, but it affected him nevertheless; it depressed him horribly.

He had been on his way home, a bit earlier than usual, sitting in the Elevated train and staring morosely out of the window at the drenched city, finding it uglier, colder, more sordid than ever before. When that curious impulse seized him, that longing he knew so well; it was a sort of spiritual thirst, an intangible desire to be assuaged by an intangible satisfaction. He got out of the train at Thirty-Eighth Street, instead of at Seventy-Second, where he belonged, and hurried east.

His destination was a little restaurant on Fourth Avenue, a compromise between the severe, white tiled cafeterias and Dairy Lunches, and the more

luxurious sort. It had separate tables and table cloths, curtains across the windows and a carpet on the floor. But was, nevertheless, very cheap, and, it must be admitted, somewhat nasty. Not the place one would have picked out for a man as prosperous, as fastidious as this one.

It was very early, and the place was empty. He opened the glass door and entered, went at once to a table in a corner and took off his dripping hat and his overcoat and hung them on a brass hat-rack beside which stood a great Japanese jar for umbrellas. A man of thirty-five or so, with a neat black moustache and a dark and saturnine face, well-dressed, in a conservative sort of way.

He didn't sit down when he had taken off his coat; he remained standing, looking about him. And in a moment a waitress came hurrying over to him, a hollow-cheeked, brown haired young woman of thirty, her fragile grace encased in a stiffly-starched white apron.

"Hello!" she said, with a serious smile.

"Hello!" he answered. "I felt I had to see you. . . . How *are* you?"

"All right, thank you! What will you have?"

"Sit down for a while!" he said. "It's too early to eat. Anyway I'll have to go home for dinner."

"You must take something!" she said. "They

won't like it if you just sit here without ordering."

He picked up the menu, but after a frowning scrutiny, threw it down.

"Anything that's not too poisonous," he said. "And hurry back, Rosaleen, before the place begins to fill up."

She returned presently with her tray, set his dishes before him, and sat down opposite him, leaning her elbows on the table and her chin in her hands.

"You must have known I wanted to see you to-day!" she said.

"Don't you always?"

"Yes, of course. But specially to-day. Because little Petey's sick, and I wanted to talk to you about it."

"Have you had a doctor?"

"Yes; but I don't like him. I don't think he's much good. I want a better one."

"I'll see you get one. . . . What's the trouble?"

"Fever," she said. "And headache, and he's sick all the time. . . . Poor little fellow!"

She stared ahead of her with troubled eyes.

"I can't help being worried," she went on. "The doctor says it's just a bilious attack, but he's been sick for four days, and he seems to be growing worse. Katie's dreadfully upset. . . . I did wish I could speak to *you*."

"Why didn't you telephone or write?"

She shook her head.

"I wouldn't like to do that!" she said. "But I did hope you'd come soon."

It was curious that they practically never looked at each other, these two. The proprietress, who had witnessed this friendship for the past five years, and with favor, because of the trade it brought, had often observed that. She had so often seen them sitting thus, at a table, looking past each other, and not speaking very much. It was her theory that they met outside, and that the man was a millionaire with a jealous wife, and that he adored her waitress. A romantic and delightful theory; she was not above recounting it as a true tale to certain friends. And it was especially nice because this most flattering attention didn't at all unsettle Rosaleen; she was invariably prompt, careful and good-tempered, a little aloof, but that was no fault.

He didn't touch his dinner to-night. He got up and thrust his arms into his overcoat again.

"Telephone to Doctor Denz as soon as you go out," he said. "I'll stop on my way home and arrange with him. . . . Try not to worry, old girl. . . . And you could telephone me at the office to-morrow, if you wanted."

"Thank you, Mr. Landry!" she answered.

As he always did, he put the money for his meal and the tip under his plate in a guilty way, and went off. But at the door he turned again, and raised his hat. And Rosaleen returned a slight wave of the hand.

II

It was a day marked by Fate as an important one—as the beginning of a new phase. Landry, however, was not in the least aware of this. He went on his way, absorbed in thought, still very serious, but unreasonably consoled, as he always was by these absurd and inarticulate interviews with Rosaleen.

He still lived in his aunt's house. He had, as he became more prosperous, made an attempt to set up an individual establishment with his mother and sister, but they didn't like New York; they weren't happy there; they pined for Charleston, and he had sent them back. And, in spite of his independence and his fastidious bachelor habits, he was very much alarmed at the idea of setting up for himself. He had pretended to his aunt and to himself that he wished to find a cosy little flat and a good valet, but he had never really looked for either. His aunt wished for nothing better than to keep him with her

forever, the house revolved about him; he had a bedroom and a study, and he was waited upon like a Sultan.

By minute degrees and in a quite incomprehensible manner, he had become accountable to his cousin Caroline. If he came in late, he explained to her why, and where he had been. If he went to a dance or a dinner without her, he returned prepared to give her all the details. He even made an effort to observe and remember things about which he knew he would be asked.

Caroline was now twenty-seven, and as far as ever from getting married. She was a chilly, languid young Southron with a pallid, freckled face and beautiful fine gold hair; she had a sort of frigid charm which sufficed to attract men, but which couldn't hold them. She had innumerable "beaux," but she had never had a man seriously in love with her. It was a severe misfortune for her; she had no other aim, no other interest in life except marriage; her days were becoming flat and weary beyond toleration to her, and a fatal resentment against men was creeping over her. Her cousin Nick was perfectly well aware that she would have married him if he had offered, but that did not flatter him, because there were several others whom she would just as soon have had, and at least one whom she

would have preferred. He certainly didn't love Caroline; he didn't even admire her, but he had for her a genuine enough sort of brotherly affection and a small secret fear. He was never quite sure what she would do.

Everything went just as usual during dinner that evening; there was the same effort to entertain and distract the man which he had grown to consider a matter of course. If either his aunt or Caroline had sat at the table preoccupied or melancholy, he would have resented it deeply. Even a headache, if it permitted the sufferer to appear at all, must be accompanied by a wan smile and an air of interest. Then after dinner they went into the library, and as usual his aunt implored him not to work, but to rest and amuse himself, and complained that they saw so little of him. He was distract, though, and anxious to get away to his little study where he could think in peace; he excused himself on the plea of work, and was making his escape when Caroline beckoned him into the little music room.

"Come here, Nickie!" she called, imperiously.

He obeyed, and she made him sit down beside her on the sofa.

"Ah've been hearing tales about you!" she said severely.

He smiled at her.

"Let's have them!"

"Jim saw you. Ah'm shocked! . . . He was over on Fou'th Avenue last week, surveying, and he says he stopped in at a funny little place there for a bite of lunch. And there he saw you in a corner with one of the waitresses——"

"Pshaw!" said Nick. "If that's the worst he can do——"

"He said she was a right pretty girl. And sitting down at the table with you. . . ."

"Very likely. Why not?"

Now Caroline had considered this tale of absolutely no importance, when she began. She had simply wished to bring it up so that they might have a little gallant badinage. But now it looked otherwise. Nick was really annoyed, and something more than annoyed. He evidently wished to get away from her and not to speak of this episode. Nick and a *waitress*! It hardly seemed credible; and yet Caroline was ready to believe the worst where men were concerned.

She went over to the piano and began to play; her one sure refuge from any difficult situation, and while she played, Nick slipped out of the room. He was curiously disturbed. This was the first time in five years that anyone had got word of his interviews with Rosaleen. He shrank with passionate

sensitiveness from any intrusion into this secret world, this intangible, ineffable companionship.

Five years! He lighted a cigar and sat down to contemplate it, with pain, with limitless regret, and yet finding a sweet consolation in their silent fidelity.

For five years he had had to watch Rosaleen living that barren and difficult life. . . .

He recalled that day, when the parlourmaid had waked him up to tell him that there was "a lady downstairs to see you, sir." A hatless, very pale lady, who had been pushed in at the door by a man who immediately disappeared. There was no trace of her when he got downstairs; he had gone out on the front steps in his dressing gown to look up and down the street, but without seeing anything. Directly he was dressed, he had gone to Lawrence, and Lawrence had lied impudently and borrowed money. He had said he didn't know where Rosaleen had gone, or why, or if she would ever return.

He recalled his tremendous two weeks' battle with Miss Waters. Day after day he had gone to entreat her, to bully, to cajole, to trick her into giving him Rosaleen's address. And she had always wept bitterly and refused.

"I promised her I wouldn't tell *anyone*!" she

said, over and over. "And you above all! Oh, Mr. Landry! I can't!"

"Don't you trust me?" he had demanded. "Do you think I'd annoy or persecute Rosaleen?"

"Of course I don't!"

"If you're really her friend,—if you're thinking of her welfare, you'll tell me where she is. She may need help."

In the end he made use of a shameful device—a thetic threat which even now made him blush. He told Miss Waters that if she wouldn't help him to see Rosaleen, he was going to kill himself; he had even brought an old revolver with him. And to save the life of this young hero, Miss Waters had told him the name of the restaurant where Rosaleen worked.

He recalled his first visit there; how he had sat at one of the tables, watching Rosaleen hurrying about, taking orders, carrying her heavy tray, submissive and alert. . . .

He had waited outside for her for hours. But she wouldn't let him take her home.

"I'm living with a married sister," she had told him. "I'm perfectly all right there. But I don't want *you* to come there, Mr. Landry!"

They had walked down Fourth Avenue and over into Madison Square Park, where they had wan-

dered for hours that windy Autumn night. She had spoken quite freely about her own people, about her mother in Philadelphia, about this sister, the only member of the family with whom she had kept in touch. She was married to a shipping clerk, and there were three small children, the youngest of whom was Petey. And they were very poor.

"You must let me help you!" said Nick. "There's no reason—no sense in your living this way."

"No," she said, very resolutely. "I wouldn't! Not for *anything*! I dare say you didn't believe me when I told you—that time—that for myself I wouldn't have thought of—borrowing. But it was true. I'd rather be as poor as poor, and be independent. And have my self-respect."

"But you don't want to go on like this? Being a waitress, and living like this. You don't want to lose all that you've gained—to slip out of the class where you belong. . . ."

"I don't belong to any class," she answered. "That's the whole trouble. I don't belong anywhere. I wish I'd been let alone. I wish I'd stayed like Katie."

"But you——" he began, and ended by murmuring something about "education" and "advantages."

"What good does it do?" she asked. "I'm not happy and I'm not useful. And in my heart I don't

want anything better—or even anything different—to what Katie wants."

"And what is that?" he asked.

"Oh,—a nice home and not too much worry—and a family, I suppose," she answered.

"Then you expect to go like this, indefinitely, although you admit you're neither happy nor useful?"

"I am a little bit useful—to Katie."

"But I can't stand it, Rosaleen, if you're not happy. I'm going to make you happy. I'm going to arrange for a divorce for you——"

"No, you're not!" she cried. "I wouldn't have it!"

"*Why?*"

"Because it's a horrid, wrong idea," she had insisted. "With his being blind—and everything. . . ."

You could never argue with that confounded woman. She never listened to the voice of reason; she listened to something else—God knows what. And every act in her life had to be in conformity with this subtle and rigid authority. She never thought, she never puzzled, about what was right and what was wrong; she simply knew at once, by instinct. And that was the end of it. She lived by

the rule of a beautiful propriety; she would never do anything which did not befit her.

Nick had given up, long ago. And now, he had almost come to believe that her way, if not *the* right way, was certainly one of the right ways of living, and that Rosaleen divorced would not have been quite Rosaleen. Sometimes, when he grew intolerably lonely for her, or when the sight of her in her white apron flying about waiting on other men incensed and distressed him more than usual, he would rail at her "obstinate, petty conventionality." But she had none the less succeeded in making him comprehend her point of view; not with words, because she was not gifted with speech, but in some way of her own, her feeling that in divorcing Lawrence and marrying Nick she would lose her own especial quality.

"It's all right for lots of people," she said. "I haven't got any particular prejudice against it. It's only a *feeling*. . . . I—well, I just *can't*, that's all."

CHAPTER TWO

I

IT was a well-known thing in that household that Nick required a long time to dress. He had come home from the office promptly at six and had gone at once to his room, where, as he had expected, his evening clothes were laid ready for him. He was to take Mrs. Allanby and Caroline to a dinner at the house of one of his senior partners, and it was an altogether particular and important occasion. Caroline was wearing a new dress, of which he thoroughly approved; she had been ready when he came home, so that he could see it and pass judgment. Mrs. Allanby was still dressing; she was, in spite of her fifty years, a lady of no little quiet coquetry, and on this occasion she had a two-fold desire to look her best, first, because she so valued her nephew's approbation, and second because she was very anxious to impress upon the senior partner how excellent a family was Nick's.

He had bathed and shaved, and was standing before the mirror in shirt and trousers, tying his white tie with severe attention, when someone

knocked at his door. He was surprised, almost affronted.

“Well!” he called. “What is it?”

“It’s Ca’line!”

“I’m not late! It’s not half past seven yet. . . .”

“No, Ah know it! But someone wants to speak to you on the telephone.”

“Who?”

“Ah don’t know. . . . A woman. . . . She wouldn’t tell her name. She said it was impo’tant. Shall Ah say you’re busy and can’t come?”

“No!” he said, hastily. “I’ll come!”

And just as he was, hurried into the little sewing room where the upstairs telephone was.

“This is Landry speaking!” he said.

And a forlorn and patient voice answered:

“It’s me—Rosaleen. . . . It’s about Petey. I’m very sorry to bother you, but I don’t know what to do, exactly.”

“Why? Tell me!”

“The doctor says it’s typhoid fever——”

“By George! That’s too bad!”

“And Katie’s. . . . It’s hard to tell it over the telephone. . . . I *wish*—couldn’t I possibly see you just for a few minutes?”

“Of course! I’ll be with you at once. Where are you?”

"I'm at home," she answered, and gave him the address she had withheld for five years.

Nick turned to Caroline.

"I'll have to go somewhere first," he said, hurriedly. "I'll try not to be late for dinner. But if I am, go without me, and I'll follow. . . . Just explain to Anson——"

"Explain what? Where are you going?"

Indignation and disappointment had brought tears to her eyes. This outrageous desertion was too much for her; she struggled for a moment to hold her tongue, but she could not.

"It's that *waitress*!" she cried. "Ah know it! Some nasty, common, scheming woman. . . . It's a *shame*! It's a *shame*!"

She began to cry.

"It's a *shame*!" she cried again.

Nick looked at her with frigid disgust.

"It happens to be a—very old friend who's in great trouble," he said.

"*What* old friend? How can you have old friends here that we never heard of?"

He turned away from her and rang up a nearby garage for a taxi.

"It's a case of serious illness," he said.

"Do you mean to say you're *not coming* to that dinner?" cried Caroline.

"Haven't you any—heart?" demanded her cousin. "I tell you, someone is seriously ill. . . ."

"What's it got to do with *you*!" cried Caroline. "Who is it? Why won't you tell me?"

When they looked back upon that episode later, it didn't seem *possible*. That these two people, so dignified, so self-restrained, so civilized, should have said what they said to each other, should have enacted so disgraceful a scene!

"Who is this person that's seriously ill?" Caroline demanded, again, with fierce contempt.

"It's none of your business!" said Nick.

He was astounded, she was astounded, by such a phrase from him.

"All right!" said she. "Go to your waitress! Ah don't care! But Ah won't go to the dinner either! And Ah won't send any word or make any excuses. *You* can do that to-morrow, in your office. *You* can explain to Mr. Anson why nobody came to his dinner party."

"You couldn't *do* such a—beastly, contemptible thing!" cried Nick in alarm. It was the special business of women to make excuses for men; they knew how; they had the art. . . . "Caroline, if you *don't*, I'll never forgive you!"

"Ah don't give a *darn*!" she cried. "There!"

"You've *got* to go!" he said, but weakly. He

couldn't make her. . . . He stood there by the telephone, white with rage, trying to think. . . . But nothing came to his brain except two horribly distressing pictures; he saw Anson and his wife and the other guests waiting, polite but astonished and resentful. . . . And he saw Rosaleen, wild with anxiety, looking out of a window for him.

"There's a taxi here, sir!" said a voice, and he saw the parlourmaid in the doorway, frankly interested at this curious spectacle of Miss Caroline in evening dress and Mr. Landry in his shirt sleeves, evidently quarreling.

"Yes, it's for me!" he said, briefly.

Without another glance at Caroline he ran into his room, hurried on his waistcoat and dress coat, thrust on his overcoat, snatched up hat and stick and rushed out.

Rage burned in him. He didn't think of Rosaleen as the taxi sped along; he thought of Caroline, with hate, with triumph.

"Let her go to the devil!" he said. "I *won't be bullied!*"

II

It was a miserable place over a bakery on Third Avenue, a squalid evil-smelling neighbourhood, with the Elevated trains thundering past. This tall man in evening dress descending from a taxi aroused

profound interest; one bright little boy said it was movies. He entered the narrow hallway from which the stairs ascended, steep as a ladder, and after striking a match, saw four name plates beneath four bells. Cohen—Moriarity—Connelly—O'Dea.

As he hesitated before them, Rosaleen herself came hurrying down the steep stairs.

"I saw you coming!" she said. "Oh, Mr. Landry, I didn't know what to do! He's sick—he's very, very sick! The doctor says he'll either have to go to the hospital or have a nurse, and Katie won't let him go. . . . She's in such a terrible state. . . ."

"Let him have a nurse, of course."

"But we can't. There's no place for a nurse to sleep. And it's not a fit place for little Petey, either. He ought to go to the hospital. He won't have any chance here. I know it's dreadful of me, but I——"

She had suddenly seized one of his hands with both of hers and pressed it violently, quite distraught, quite unconscious of what she did.

"I don't care! I made up my mind that I *would* ask you. . . . Won't you come upstairs and talk to Katie? You don't know how she feels about a hospital. . . . She's only known people in the wards, where—it isn't so nice. . . . When you're so poor, you're—so helpless. . . . If you'd just tell her that Petey's to have a private room and a nurse

and everything done for him, and that she can see him any time she wants. . . .? Oh, I know it will cost a fortune! I have no right to ask you. . . . But I knew you'd do it!"

"You don't know how glad I am to be asked," said Nick. "Come on! Let's go upstairs!"

This where she lived—where she had lived for five years! This dirty, dilapidated hole, dark, airless, with grimy windows on a malodorous court, with the thundering roar of the trains making the very walls shake, with these pitiful and fragile little children always underfoot! He had known that she was poor, that the whole family was poor, but he had not imagined anything like this. He had never set foot in such a place before. It filled him with horror, these mean, cramped little quarters which the despair of poverty had left dirty and neglected. There wasn't a chair in that room on which he dared to sit, one had a broken back, another a broken seat, another had a leg missing. . . .

There came bursting into the room a big, gaunt woman like a fury, desperate with grief and fright.

"What is it ye want?" she cried, to Nick.

Rosaleen began to whisper to her, and she became calmer, became little by little composed and shrewd. This was a man from whom benefits might be expected.

"I thought maybe you were from the Board!" she explained. "'Tis them do be worrying the likes of us whenever there is any sickness in it at all."

She had been living in a very nightmare of fear; her little child was ill and the world was conspiring to snatch it from her. She was quite determined that it should not go. She didn't know, poor soul, just what awful powers the police and the health officials might have. She was accustomed to their authority. It might be the law to take her child away. But law or no law, she would not have it! She saw hope in this rich friend of Rosaleen's; she clung to him; she fawned upon him.

She opened the door of the room where Petey lay. There was nothing in it but two big wooden beds. Outside from the fire escape hung a line of limp clothing fluttering in the night wind; nothing else to be seen. . . . The sick baby lay motionless in the centre of one of the wide beds, blazing with fever, his face scarlet, his brow pitifully contorted, his eyes closed. His limp little body seemed scarcely to raise the bed covers; his arms lay outside the counterpane, with their thin, flat wrists, the tiny, stubby hands. . . .

The mother flew over to him and tucked his arms under the blanket.

"Do you want to catch yer death!" she cried, harshly, to the unconscious child.

She passed her hand over his burning head, feeling the hard, round little skull under the fine hair.

"He's that hot!" she said. And suddenly began wailing.

"Oh, he cannot live at all! Well do I know he's to be took from me! Petey! Oh, Petey, my darlin'!"

Rosaleen tried to quiet her.

"Listen, Katie dearie!" she said. "Mr. Landry's going to help us! Petey's going to have a beautiful big room all to himself——"

Her sister swore at her.

"I will not let them lave a hand on Petey!" she cried. "They'll not take him from me!"

"Katie, you can go with him!" Rosaleen promised. "You can go to the hospital with him and sit by him for a while, can't she, Mr. Landry?"

"Yes," said Nick. "It'll be just as Rosaleen says."

III

THEY had gone, Katie and her baby, in a private ambulance, and Nick had arranged with the doctor for the child's reception. It seemed as if a terrible storm had come and gone, leaving an unnatural calm. He sat in the little hole Katie called her

"parlour," with its dirty lace curtains, its little gilt table, the two broken rocking chairs with "tidies" fastened to their backs by stained red ribbons.

Rosaleen tried to explain to him. She tried, in her tongue-tied way, to draw for him a picture of all these lives. Katie, she told him, was a wonderful woman, a wife of unlimited loyalty, a mother of passionate and ceaseless devotion. Her husband was a shipping clerk; he had worked in various department stores, but he was very unlucky; he was always hurting himself, straining his back, crushing his fingers, dropping crates on his feet. And with the three children, and big Pete laid up so often, you could see. . . .

"And I don't make much," she said, simply. "Sometimes we think we *can't* get on. But we do."

She sighed, with all that dreadful resignation of hers.

But Nick had nothing to say to that recital of hers; he sat in complete silence for a long time. Rosaleen watched him covertly; she worshipped him; she thought, that in his evening dress, he was the most distinguished, the most magnificent creature she had ever seen. Oh, there was no one like him! Her Nick, who never failed her, who always understood her, who never took advantage of her misfortunes. . . . He did not look at her; how was

she to know that *he* was worshipping *her*, abashed and humble before her matchless compassion and unselfishness. She suffered all things, endured all things, and was kind. . . .

In squalor, poverty and incessant anxiety, she had kept her spirit tranquil and true. Her affection which never criticised, made no demands, seemed to him to sanctify this place. He remembered that when he had first learned of her origin, in Miss Amy's violent words, he had believed himself "disillusioned"; and had been bitter and angry toward her. That was nearly eight years ago; she was thirty now; the best of her youth was over, had passed in cruel and thankless servitude. No matter what happened in the future, that couldn't be effaced, those wrongs could never be repaired. Lawrence had exploited her shamelessly, Miss Amy had exploited her, her sister in her blind and pitiful motherhood would have drained her dry of blood for the benefit of her children; he himself had repudiated and deserted her. And she had no rancour, no bitterness even toward life in the abstract. She was simply resigned, a little sorrowful, but brave, patient, enduring to the uttermost end.

He got up suddenly and held out his hand.

"Good night!" he said, brusquely. "You'll hear from me very soon."

CHAPTER THREE

I

HE had never been so wretched before. It was the suffering of a vigorous and obstinate man entangled in a situation in which he is unable to move. He wished to lay everything at Rosaleen's feet, and yet could give her nothing. He longed to relieve her intolerable burdens, and could not take a step toward doing so.

And, as always when he was not able to act, anger took possession of him. He was cool, resolute, self-controlled enough when there was anything for him to do, but tie his hands and his blood began to boil. His wrath began to descend upon Lawrence. He decided that he would go to see him, to threaten, to bully, to bribe, in some way to force him to free Rosaleen against her will. He refused to see the absurdity of this; directly he had made the decision he felt a sort of peace, and he was able to go home and to sleep.

He knew very well that there must be a reckoning at home, and he welcomed it. He wanted it. He blamed all the world for Rosaleen's sufferings.

He wished to defend her and to fight for her. Unaccountably and very unjustly he was angry at his aunt and at Caroline. (Or was it perhaps that he subconsciously wished to forestall their reproaches?) . . . However, he appeared at breakfast the next morning in a most unpleasant mood. He said "Good morning!" frigidly to Mrs. Allanby, and sat down at the table with a frown.

"I'd like to speak to you alone for a minute, if you please!" he said.

With a gesture his aunt dismissed the servant, and sat looking quietly at him.

"About last night," he began. "I told Caroline it was a case of urgent necessity. She couldn't—or *wouldn't* understand."

"Ah think it would have been better to have made your excuses to Mr. Anson," she said, evenly.

"I left that to—to you. You understand that sort of thing. You have so much tact. . . ."

"You didn't ask me, Nick!"

"I hadn't time. Good Lord! Caroline isn't a child. She ought to understand——"

"Understand just what? You didn't tell her where you were going, or why. No! Please don't interrupt me for a minute! Ah know you're not accountable to us in any way. But we were just going to that dinner for your sake, because you asked us.

And . . . Ah'm disappointed in you. Ah can't help it!"

"You shouldn't be. It's not fair. It was an urgent matter. I was worried and upset, and perhaps I did neglect certain formalities. But under the circumstances, you ought to make allowances."

"But what were the circumstances? You must remember we don't know them."

He was silent; then he asked, abruptly.

"What happened? What did you do?"

"Ah went. Ah thought if Ca'line went, too, it might make an odd number. Ah told Mr. Anson that an old friend of the family had met with an accident and that you and Ca'line had gone to him."

"That was nice of you!" said Nick, gratefully.
"Then it's all right, is it?"

"As far as Mr. Anson goes. But Ah *do* think. . . . Boy, you don't know how you worry me."

He looked at her, with quite his old smile.

"No!" he said. "I will *not* tell you! Not yet!"

II

It was the first time in years that he had stopped away from his office. But he was too sternly intent upon his new purpose to be able to think of anything else. He sat in his study, smoking a cigar, until it seemed to him a reasonable hour, and then set out.

He was very nervous; more so than he realised. And his descent into that old neighbourhood revived a hundred memories to oppress him. He fancied he saw her ghost, its arms full of bundles, running through Fourth Street. . . .

“The best of her life wasted!” he said to himself, over and over. It gave him courage.

He needed courage, too. He was very much afraid of Lawrence; not, of course, in a physical sense, but because Lawrence had any number of mysterious advantages. Lawrence was blind and helpless, Lawrence was Rosaleen’s lawful husband, Lawrence was infinitely more sophisticated and subtle than himself. . . . A formidable adversary. He made no plan of what he should say; with such a person it was not possible, for you couldn’t know in what humour you would catch him. He resolved simply to keep his temper and to flinch at nothing.

The front door was unlatched, as it had always been in the old days; he entered and went upstairs, knocked on the familiar door. But a strange voice answered him, a strange young man lived in there, who knew nothing whatever of Lawrence Iverson.

He made a few other enquiries in the house, but without result.

He was on his way home, walking up Fifth Avenue while he watched for his bus, when he passed

a familiar corner, and he decided to call upon Miss Waters. She was a link with the old days.

There at least nothing was changed. She sat as usual in the dusty old studio, and she herself was as dusty, as wrinkled, as flustered as before. And inordinately delighted to see him. She even wept.

"I hardly ever see Rosaleen," she said. "Once in a great, great while, on a Sunday, she drops in. But I don't blame her, poor girl! She's so busy and so worried. . . . You don't *know*—"

She was obliged to stop and dry her eyes.

"You don't know how much I miss those old days!" she said. "I always loved Rosaleen like my own child. . . . Poor girl! I never saw much of her during her married life. Her husband and I were not—very congenial. But there's always been such a *bond* between us, Mr. Landry! I can't help saying to *you* that I think that marriage was a mistake!"

"Not much doubt about *that*! Do you happen to know where the—the fellow's gone?"

"No. I never enquired. And I haven't kept track of the old crowd."

Poor soul! Not one of the "old crowd" except Miss Mell had ever come near her.

"I'm not up-to-date on news of the quarter!" she said, archly. "Don't come to me for *that*, Mr. Landry!"

"I didn't. I came because I wanted to see you."

She was pleased; she wished that she had put her least dusty velvet bow in her hair instead of this gnawed little thing that now perched there. . . .

Perhaps his love for Rosaleen had given Nick a more understanding heart, or perhaps it was that he was well-disposed toward everyone associated with the beloved woman, but from whatever cause, he saw Miss Waters that day in a new light. He saw her not as a comic old maid, but as a quite admirable human being. She was a plucky old girl, struggling along with art lessons, and a wonderful friend.

She began asking him about himself, but he became more and more distract. Suddenly he told her the whole story.

She was astonished, she was profoundly touched; she wept bitterly, but she was delighted, both because the magnificent Mr. Landry had seen fit to confide in her, and because it was a romantic history, such as she loved.

"I don't know what to do," he said, when he had finished. "I don't know how to help her. Can you suggest anything?"

And, to his surprise, she did.

"No, of course, *you* can't do anything," she said. "But if you could only get the ladies of your family interested in her. . . . *They* could do *anything*!"

"What could they do?"

"Oh, they'd think of all sorts of ways, if they really wanted to help!"

"They wouldn't, though," he said gloomily.

"They've got all sorts of prejudices. . . ."

"If they could see her, and get to know her, it would be all right."

"My aunt has seen her, you know!"

"Yes, but don't you see! *Now* she's the wife of the distinguished artist Lawrence Iverson! Think what a difference that makes!"

"I never thought of her—like that. . . . And you think they could help her?"

"I'm sure of it! And you know, dear Mr. Landry, people love to be associated with Artists. As Mrs. Lawrence Iverson, you know, she's really a most interesting figure. Someone might be induced to set her up in an Antique Shop, or something like that."

In the end they decided that Mrs. Allanby and Caroline should be suddenly confronted with Rosaleen in this new and impressive rôle.

"But we can't tell Rosaleen!" said Miss Waters. "She'd never consent. She's so retiring. I'll tell you what! I'll give a studio party, next Saturday evening, and if you'll bring them, I'll get Rosaleen here. Will you?"

III

NEVER had Miss Waters been so excited. The moment Landry had left, she hurried out and bought a small plane. She desired that there should be dancing at her party, and to make that possible, she would have to "do" the studio floor. There were two pupils working in there, and it disturbed them very much when Miss Waters got down on her hands and knees in one corner and began to use her plane. However, it didn't last long. An hour's work convinced her that the whole floor would take her some years to finish. She employed the plane instead with great zest on those little shelves she had put up; she smoothed them off and painted them a very artistic orange, with a stencil of black tulips. She was, you must know, very handy with tools. . . .

Her preparations were most extensive. She spent an outrageous amount of time and money, and she bought too much of everything. Two hundred cigarettes, among other things, and a plethora of flowers. She made little wreaths to put on the heads of her plaster statues, and she painted a little card for each guest to take home as a souvenir.

IV

ROSALEEN had not been warned. She had come directly from the restaurant, in her threadbare suit

and her faded black hat. And to be ushered into the midst of a chattering party of twelve or fifteen people was a terrible ordeal to her. She turned quite pale; she stood in the doorway, drawing off her gloves and smiling nervously. At first she didn't quite grasp it. . . .

It startled her, too, for Miss Waters to address her as "Mrs. Iverson," and to present her so. At first she saw only one familiar face, and that was Miss Mell's, the same, stout, bespectacled friend of the old studio days. And then suddenly she caught sight of a face from a nightmare. . . . Surely that lady who had sat in the Humberts' kitchen. . . .

She was hurried forward by Miss Waters, and Mrs. Lawrence Iverson was presented to Mrs. Allanby. Who instantly recognised her. And to Miss Caroline Allanby, who at once knew that this was the person who had beguiled Nick. . . . And Nick, who was standing behind them, and Miss Waters, both saw immediately that the experiment had failed. The two ladies didn't care a fig for the wife of the distinguished artist; they greeted her politely, but with unmistakable chilliness. There was more in this than met the eye! They had suspected *something* when Nick had been so insistent about bringing them to this "studio party."

There were three lively rings at the door bell, and Miss Waters was glad to hasten away to admit the

latest comer. It was Miss Gosorkus, more friendly, more exuberant than ever before. She beamed at everyone and sat down at the side of Dodo Mell.

"Hello, Mell!" she cried. "How are you? I haven't seen you for ages upon ages! . . . Do you remember the larks we used to have up in your old studio?"

Miss Mell had never been enthusiastic regarding Miss Gosorkus; she remembered what a great nuisance she had been; she answered with moderation.

"And doesn't it seem sort of sad?" Miss Gosorkus went on. "Enid gone to live abroad, and poor Lawrence Iverson gone!"

Everyone heard her; everyone looked up with interest. Dodo tried to whisper a warning, but it was not heard.

"You heard, didn't you?" she went on. "It was the saddest thing! You know, of course, that the poor man went blind. And then, my dear, that heartless, awful woman he'd married deserted him. I believe she ran off with another man."

"Shut up!" whispered Dodo. "Don't you *see* her?"

"Who?" asked Miss Gosorkus aloud, her babyish eyes searching the room. She didn't recognise Rosaleen, even as a vaguely familiar face.

"And after that," she continued, "the poor man went to Paris, and he was run over by a taxi. He's been dead five years."

CHAPTER FOUR

I

NICK crossed the room and sat down beside Miss Gosorkus, scowling and pale.

“You’re *sure*?” he asked.

“Sure?” she repeated, enquiringly.

“About Iverson. About his being dead?”

“Why, of course, I am! I . . .”

“How did you hear of it?”

“A friend of mine in Paris . . .”

“Will you give me the address and let me write to her?”

“*Him*. It’s a gentleman,” said Miss Gosorkus with a smirk.

“Give me *his* address then.”

He had taken out a note-book and a fountain pen, and sat waiting while Miss Gosorkus somewhat reluctantly gave the information. Then he got up and looked about for Rosaleen. She was not there. He approached his aunt.

“Order a taxi when you’re ready to go,” he said, in a tone designed to discourage questions. Then said good-bye curtly to Miss Waters, and hurried off.

It was raining fiercely when he reached the street, but he felt nevertheless obliged to walk. He set off across the Square and up Fifth Avenue, a solitary figure in the broad and deserted street.

The barriers were all demolished. She was free —after all these years; no obstacles separated them. And instead of joy, terror and alarm had seized him. The idea of marrying her seemed monstrous. He didn't want to! And the more he didn't want to, the more inexorably did he feel obliged, compelled to do so without delay. It was a debt of honour, to be paid instantly, without reflection.

He was determined to follow her home to that squalid and horrible flat, and insist upon the earliest possible wedding. She would, of course, have all sorts of tiresome and irritating objections which he would have to override. He would have to be masterful, resolute, fervent, and there was nothing of that sort in him. He felt singularly cold and aloof; he felt the strongest sort of inclination to run away from the whole affair. He said to himself that he wanted a "chance to think it over," but really he did not. He wished, on the contrary, to forget it, never to think of it again. Romance had departed from his Rosaleen. She was no longer tragic, pitiful, inaccessible. She was nothing more or less than

a very obscure and ordinary woman whom he was in honour bound to marry. Quite suddenly he saw his folly, the outrageous thing this was, to waste and ruin his life through this profoundly unsuitable marriage, which would bring him nothing but unhappiness. What was he going to do with her? He remembered her in the studio days, shabby, worn with humiliation and distress, he remembered the shocking scene in the Humberts' kitchen; he remembered her—most painful memory of all—in the restaurant, in her white apron, carrying her big tray. . . . He was ashamed of her. . . .

He clenched his hands as he walked along, and his face was grim and desperate. He remembered how he had loved Rosaleen, and love appeared to him as something intangible and silly. What the devil did it amount to? *Why* must he do this? He had got on very well without her thus far. . . . Now he would have to change his life completely; he would have to leave his comfortable quarters at his aunt's and go off to live somewhere alone with Rosaleen. As he was prepared to make this immense sacrifice for her, he felt justified in dwelling upon the small and intolerable details. What would his friends say, his business associates? . . . He would be ashamed of her. . . . Barren and disgusting duty, flat and insipid beyond measure. . . .

He had reached the house on Third Avenue and entered it, rang the bell in the vestibule and ascended the dirty stairs, in the dark and the foul air. Katie opened the door for him, and admitted him grudgingly, almost with hostility. She did not like him, and, like Rosaleen, her favour was not to be won by benefits. No matter what he did for her and for her family, she would *never* like him, because he was condescending and superior. She took him into the parlour, and he sat there for an hour, quite alone, with one dim, ghastly jet of gas burning inside a fluted blue china globe. At intervals the elevated trains came rushing past, and blotted out every other sound and perception from his startled and affronted brain; then in the lull he would hear Katie's voice in the kitchen talking to the little children. It was ten o'clock, but there was no air of its being bedtime, or evening. The woman was still working, the children still playing; one might have imagined their days to be endless.

Sickened and depressed, and utterly disheartened, Landry got up.

"Please tell Rosaleen I'll come again to-morrow," he called.

It had cleared when he came out into the street again. He set off homeward, wondering where Rosaleen might be. Did she, too, feel it necessary

to walk and to be alone? He was certainly not sorry to have missed her; he was glad that he was to have an opportunity for planning a proper, gentlemanly speech. He felt that if he were to come face to face with her now he could say nothing better than—

“I suppose there’s no reason why we shouldn’t get married now.”

It never occurred to him to wonder how she was feeling, what she was thinking. He was simply convinced that her attitude would be irritating.

II

IF he could have seen where she was! Meek, patient, quiet, her feet crossed, her hands in her lap, she was sitting in his aunt’s drawing-room, waiting for Mrs. Allanby’s return. Her face was inexpressive; it was a face incapable of expression, like her voice and her gestures. She was inarticulate, forever cut off from her fellows by this queer helplessness. Nothing that went on in her brain or her heart could ever be known by other people; she couldn’t show it, and she couldn’t tell it. She sat there now without the least shadow on her face of the dread and misery she was enduring.

She had hurried out ahead of Nick because she

wanted to cry; because she was obliged to cry, and she was afraid that this inexplicable weeping would annoy him. She had run down the front steps and into the shelter of the basement door and had stood there sobbing frantically and silently for some time. . . . Oh, if she could only draw a great, free breath, and go where she wanted and do as she pleased, and have no duties and obligations toward anyone! If only, for one week even, she could behave as she liked, without implicating any other person in her behaviour! No: she was eternally bound to please people and to help people. She was mortally weary of it. The tyranny of the Humberts, the tyranny of Enid, the tyranny of Lawrence, were all about to be succeeded and swallowed up in a tyranny a thousand times more exacting and difficult. To satisfy Nick she would have to make herself over, and at thirty that is not at all easy or pleasant, even for a loving woman. For Nick she would have to keep young and cheerful, when she felt immeasurably old and discouraged. She would have to make a place for herself in his world, and to maintain it.

She dried her eyes and straightened her hat. She waited for a few moments in her dark little niche, looking out at the rain, and reflecting. She gave her attention to Miss Gosorkus, to Nick, to the aunt, to the cousin. And a very great resentment grew up

in her, a stern and almost ferocious determination. *She* was going to get some profit from this situation; why not? Why should she always give, and sacrifice, and efface herself? She made up her mind to begin her new life under the most favourable possible circumstances, to eliminate all possible disadvantages. She was filled with anger against all these people, and a strong proletarian desire to retaliate, to repay their indifference, their ignorance of her life and of her heart, with arrogance, with bitterness. It was not a new feeling; she had had it often before, for Miss Amy, for Lawrence, for other people less important to her. It was the immeasurable resentment of a gentle and fine spirit against the inferior people who oppress it.

• • • • • • • • •

She heard the sound of a motor drawing up outside, then the bell rang, and she saw the parlour maid hurry through the hall to open the door.

“There’s a lady waiting to see you, ma’am,” she heard her say, and Caroline said:

“Ma gracious! At *this* time of night!”

Then, from where she sat, she could see the slim feet and ankles of Caroline ascending the stairs, and in a moment Mrs. Allanby entered.

She actually turned pale, perhaps for the first time in her life.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh . . . you . . . Mrs. Iverson. . . . Please sit down!"

Rosaleen was glad to do so, because her knees were weak. And for some time they sat opposite each other, their eyes averted, saying not a word. Mrs. Allanby grey haired and elegant, in her black crêpe de chine, Rosaleen dejected, pensive, worn.

"I wanted to speak to you before I saw Nick," she said, suddenly. "I wanted to see . . ."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Allanby, encouragingly. A wild hope had sprung up in her that perhaps Rosaleen didn't *wish* to marry Nick, that perhaps she had fallen in love with some undesirable person like herself.

"I suppose you'd like to make the best of a bad bargain?" said Rosaleen.

These words struck Mrs. Allanby forcibly; they destroyed her hope completely. She murmured:

"If it's a bad bargain, why make it?"

Rosaleen ignored this.

"He'll ask me to marry him," she said, "and I'll say 'yes'. . . . But there are—a lot of difficulties . . ."

"Yes," said Mrs. Allanby, quickly. "You are frank with me, Mrs. Iverson, and Ah shall be frank

with you. There *are* a great many difficulties. It's not . . . no; it's not a suitable match for either of you. Ah don't think—in fact, Ah'm *sure* you'd neither of you be happy. If you will weigh the disadvantages . . .”

“Nobody could possibly know the disadvantages better than I do!” said Rosaleen. “But . . . we've . . . liked each other for a long time, and nothing can stop us now. We're surely going to be married . . . And it needn't be so bad, if you'll help me. That's what I came for—to ask you to help me. Will you, Mrs. Allanby?”

Mrs. Allanby was astounded.

“But . . . Ah don't see how you can expect me to help you!” she said, “when—Ah would prefer—for it not to take place.”

“But it *will* take place! That's just the point! You're fond of Nick. You want things to go well for him. That's what I meant by making the best of a bad bargain.”

“Ma dear,” said Mrs. Allanby. “Ah wish you would listen to me. Ah'm so much older than you. Ah know—the world. Marriages like this *can't* be happy. It's been tried over and over again; people like you and Nick——”

“There never were two people *just* like us. Everybody's different,” said Rosaleen, struggling with her

thought. "Anyway, really and truly, Mrs. Allanby, it's no use pointing out all that. You couldn't say anything I don't know. And, after all, *I'm* the one it'll be hardest for. *I'm* the one who'll have to struggle, and learn, and change myself. *I'm* the one with all the handicaps."

She paused for a moment. She thought of her barren and desolate life, of the terrible future stretching before her. And this woman was asking her to give up her unique solace and hope, was ready to argue with this perishing creature as to whether it should seize the rope flung out as it drowned.

"Why!" she cried, appalled, outraged. "Can't you think of *me* for an instant? What could I do? How could I go on—without him? . . . Why should I give him up? How can you possibly ask me to?"

"For his sake," said Mrs. Allanby. "If you love him, you must be willing to sacrifice yourself."

"I've been sacrificing myself until there's hardly anything *left* of me!" she cried passionately. "And it's never done anyone any good. People just ask me as a matter of course. . . . But *not* this time. . . . Why should I? He's known me for years and years. He hasn't cared for anyone else. Well, have I done him any harm? Have I had a bad influence?"

"No, ma dear, of cou'se not. Ah'm not saying anything whatever against *you*."

"Except that I'm not good enough. . . . Now then, *please*, Mrs. Allanby, won't you look at it this way for a minute? I could just as well marry Nick to-morrow——"

She stopped for an instant.

"And I *will*," she went on, with downcast eyes, "if I can't get you to help me . . . But I want to make the best of it. I want us to—to have our chance. . . ."

Mrs. Allanby was beaten. She saw that she couldn't stop this thing. She had either to make a futile struggle which would certainly antagonise Nick, or she must, as Rosaleen said, make the best of a bad bargain.

"What did you think Ah would do?" she asked with a smothered sigh.

A flush came into Rosaleen's pallid face. She had won! And at once she grew gentler.

"First of all, if you'd lend me enough money to send my sister and her family to Philadelphia, and get them settled there," she said. "I don't mean that I'm—trying to get rid of them, or anything like that. I want to help them always, and I'm sure Nick will, too. But it's far better for them not to be here—for him not to see them again."

“And what else?”

“And then . . . if you’ll teach me things—show me how to dress, and to act and all that . . . ? Before I marry Nick?”

Mrs. Allanby was silent for a while, struggling with her profound disappointment. At last, with a long, inward sigh:

“He might have done worse!” she said to herself, and held out her hand to Rosaleen with a charming smile.

III

ROSALEEN went down the steps of the house with a strange feeling of coldness. A hard, scheming woman, that’s what she was, determined to use whatever advantage a niggardly fate had given her. Not a loving or tender thought was in her head, nothing but her odious triumph.

She reached the street and was half-way along the block when she saw him coming. She knew him, even in the dark, his heavy, vehement stride, the soft hat pulled so low over his eyes, the unbuttoned overcoat swaying from his big shoulders. And her frigidity suddenly melted, gave place to a sort of alarm. She wanted to hide, to avoid him, an impossible desire in that decorous and deserted street. There was nothing to do but to advance. She came

abreast of him, but he didn't turn his head. It never occurred to him that Rosaleen could be here, near his own home, at this hour. It was simply a woman passerby. He went on. . . . And suddenly heard her running after him.

"Mr. Landry," she cried, with a little laugh. "Don't you *know* me?"

He wheeled about, startled.

"I didn't expect you to be here," he said. "I've just come from your sister's. I waited there . . . I wanted to see you."

"Yes," she said, "and *I* wanted to see *you*. I've been having a talk with your aunt."

"What about?" he asked, hastily.

"Oh . . . Let's walk over into the Park and talk?"

He assented, rather ungraciously, because he would have preferred making the suggestion himself, and they turned down the next cross street and into a deserted and solitary walk in the Park. It was a harsh and blustery night; no rain was falling, but the walks were wet and glistening and the bare branches shook down chilly drops when the wind blew. There was no one about; they had the place to themselves, and Nick selected a bench near a light, where he could see her face—if he wished.

He took a newspaper from his overcoat pocket and spread it for her to sit on.

“Now,” he said. “Let’s hear what you had to say to Aunt Emmie!”

His tone wasn’t pleasant; this visit had made him suspicious and uneasy.

“I wanted . . . no, I’d rather not tell you . . .” said Rosaleen.

“Very well!” he said briefly.

He slouched down, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, looking at the trees and shrubs before him absurdly illuminated by the electric light. Like scenery on the stage, he thought, except that the colours were too drab and indefinite. . . . He felt extraordinarily miserable, sorrowful, irritated. He began to feel sorry for this partner of his dreary romance.

“You’ll marry me at once, won’t you, Rosaleen?” he asked, with an innocent sort of kindness. And instead of answering as he had expected, she cried suddenly—

“*Why?*”

He tried his best to say “Because we love each other,” but he could not utter the words. A gust of wind brought down a shower from the tree behind them, pattering with sudden violence on his hat.

“Well . . .” he said, irresolutely. “I . . .

we're too—mature to be very sentimental, aren't we, Rosaleen? . . . I mean—we *like* each other . . . we get on well together . . .”

“How do you know? We've never tried.”

“We would, I'm sure. . . . There's no use in talking and talking about the thing. We wanted to get married, and now, at last, we can.”

“Perhaps—we don't want to. Perhaps it's too late.”

“Nonsense!” he said, brusquely, but horribly without conviction. He had *nothing* to say, really; he was unable to plead, to argue, even to discuss. Another melancholy shower came down on them, and he rose.

“Better not sit here,” he said. “You'll be drenched.”

She didn't answer. He waited a few minutes, then he said, a little impatiently:

“Come! You'd better not sit here!”

He was desperate to escape from this intolerable situation. He bent over to take her by the hand and raise her to her feet, when he observed that she was wiping her eyes with a crumpled handkerchief.

“What's the matter?” he asked, gently.

He could hardly believe his ears.

“*What!*” he cried, startled.

And she repeated her amazing phrase.

"You've *cheated* me," she sobbed.

"But how?" he demand. "In what way? What *do* you mean?"

He had to sit down beside her again to hear her words.

"I wanted you . . . to be . . . dear . . . and loving," she sobbed.

"To be *dear* and *loving*," he repeated, in astonishment.

And suddenly she stretched out her arms toward him. He faltered, for an instant, and then he caught her tightly in a compassionate embrace. He was so sorry for the weeping and sorrowful woman. She strained herself close against him, with her arms about his neck, still sobbing a little, her soft hair brushed against his face. . . . His compassion began to go, began to merge into a passionate tenderness. He kissed her with delight, with rapture, this sweet and mysterious woman. . . . He drew her head down on his breast, and looked at her in the strained, thin light high overhead. He lost himself in the radiance of her eyes, the curves of her patient and tender mouth; he kissed her again, and was startled at the texture of her skin. Her hair was like a misty halo about her face; her eyes met his with a look which he could not comprehend, but which thrilled him beyond measure. . . . He had here the

answer to all his miserable perplexity. Never once during all the time he had known her had he held her like this. He hadn't even had the sense to realise that he wished to do so. And not knowing this, he had known nothing. This ecstasy was the reason, was the very core and heart of the situation.

"I love you," he said, with absolute conviction, absolute sincerity. She raised her head and gave him a sudden, fierce little kiss.

"What was the *matter* with us this evening?" she cried. "How could we have been so stupid, after we've loved each other so long?"

It was just that, the long thwarting and crushing of their love, that had so wounded them both. That love, without a sign, without so much as a hand-clasp, starved, chilled, denied, had grown morose and fearful. It was only now, with her pitiful and lovely feminine gesture, that she had broken down the barrier between them. Their love had nothing to do with suitability and expediency, as known to them: it was suitable and expedient according to a plan older and subtler than the social one of which they were aware. They were the one man and the one woman. There was something between them indestructible and inexplicable, something sturdier and deeper than desire and yet whose root was in desire.

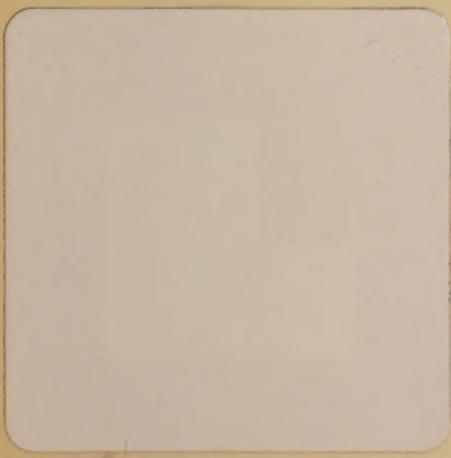
Rosaleen, thrilled and exultant as she was, was nevertheless a woman, and forever anxious.

“You’re *sure?*” she asked. “You’re *sure* I won’t ruin your life if I marry you?”

“I’m sure you’ll ruin my life if you *don’t!*” he said.

They saw nothing but the life that lay before them: they had forgotten all that had gone by: they had forgotten the past, as much a part of their eternal existence as anything which might yet come.

THE END



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